

AFR AMERICAN HISTORY TO ERN ERA

A pioneering chronicle of the Black
People in twentieth-century America.

HERBERT APTHEKER

Citadel Press

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HERBERT APTHEKER

*AFRO-AMERICAN
HISTORY:*

The Modern Era

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TO THE MEMORY OF LOUIS E. BURNHAM

Author's Note

Several of the chapters making up this book were published, in somewhat altered form, in various periodicals commencing in 1940. Changes are stylistic and occasionally reflect the discovery of factual inaccuracy; in no case are they substantive. In several instances the reader's attention is called to works published subsequent to original appearance where these offer significant additional information.

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«INTRODUCTION»

Black Studies: Realities and Needs

A racist society breeds and needs a racist historiography. Where the racism was blatant and naked and where the relationship of forces was still heavily weighted on the side of the oppressors, the Veil, in the historical profession, seemed all but impenetrable. This was the period when Claude Bowers was *the* authority on Reconstruction and U. B. Phillips was *the* authority on the nature of slavery in the United States.

To persist in such a tactic in the face of what has happened to the world since World War II and in the face of the level of the liberation movement of the Afro-American people is not possible. Instead one has today—as part of the effort to retain the substance of racism—an increasing flood of Myrdalian and Freudian literature, as in the works of Arnold Rose, Daniel Moynihan, Harold Cruse, and Stanley Elkins, adorned, from time to time, in the rhetoric of a bastardized “Marxism”—notably in the case of Eugene D. Genovese.

Another tactic is the practice of a kind of “separatism,” with bookstores being flooded by what is called “Black literature,” much of it poorly edited and hastily produced—almost improvised—with the obvious intent of making a fast buck. At the same time, what may be called “mainstream books”—dealing with literature and/or poetry as a whole in the United States, or with the history of the United States, or significant sections there—

of, or with important segments of life in the United States, as higher education, for example—keep appearing, from leading publishers and carrying the names of well-known scholars, but these are as oblivious of the existence of Afro-American people as such books were thirty or forty years ago.

Examples are in order. Professor Frederick J. Hoffman, in his widely used study, *The Twenties: American Writing in the Postwar Decade*, first published by Viking in 1955 and reissued by the Free Press in 1965, notes that those years “were marked by a disrespect for tradition and an eager wish to try out any new suggestions regarding the nature of man—his personal beliefs, convictions, or way to salvation” (p. 14). His examination of the works of Faulkner, Hemingway, Lewis, Waldo Frank, Sherwood Anderson, and others certainly substantiates the thesis.

It would have been significantly bulwarked, however, had Hoffman not confined his idea of American writing to authors whose skins were white. Such provincialism—to use no harsher word—would be a serious weakness in any case but, when discussing the era of the Harlem Renaissance, it becomes positively vitiating. For in creative writing the Twenties saw the appearance of the novels and poetry of Du Bois, Hughes, Rudolf Fisher, Wallace Thurman, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, James Weldon Johnson, Jessie Fauset, Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Toomer, Eric Waldron, and Gwendolyn Bennett, and the verse anthologies edited by William S. Braithwaite. Furthermore, these writers—Black and white—influenced each other and all were influenced by the realities of their environments and that environment was neither all Black nor all white. By ignoring all this, Hoffman is not only obviously falsifying the record of “American” writing; he is, in fact, distorting the work of those white writers whom he does consider.

Professors Richard Hofstadter and Wilson Smith combined their erudition to produce, as editors, a huge two-volume work published by the University of Chicago in 1961 on *American Higher Education: A Documentary Record*. These volumes ignore the Black component of that “record.” In its hundreds of pages, the Afro-American is noted only in a six-page section (978–984) on “Racial and Religious Barriers” taken from the 1947 *Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education*, and not in terms of what he says or does or thinks or wants, but only in terms of what the Commission says he faces. Hofstadter and Smith have produced, therefore, a truncated and distorted—and racist—history.

In 1963 Frank Freidel of Harvard and Norman Pollack, then of Yale, jointly edited an enormous volume of six-hundred thousand words entitled *Builders of American Institutions: Readings in United States History* (Rand McNally); this commences with the seventeenth century and concludes with “The Sixties: New Frontier.” There is not a word by a Black man or woman in the book. In the section entitled “The Abolitionists and Slavery Advocates” readings come from Professor Dwight L. Dumond, from two pro-slavery advocates—George Fitzhugh and William Harper—and from three opponents of slavery—Garrison, Weld, and Channing. Thirteen people are quoted in the sections on the Civil War and Reconstruction but they are all white; and so it goes—absolutely colorless to the final page!

In 1969 Holt, Rinehart, and Winston produced a two-volume work of nine-hundred oversized pages, entitled *The History of the United States: Source Readings* (from 1600 to the present), edited by Neil Harris of Harvard, David Rothman of Columbia, and Stephan Thernstrom of Brandeis. Oscar Handlin of Harvard, in his preface, assures the reader that the two volumes “bring to life the people and events of the past” and that they “illuminate the development of the Americans through their whole

history." But in the first volume, by Black people (which goes through 1876), one finds only eight pages from (the by now fairly well-known) "Confessions" of Nat Turner; nothing else. This might be compared with, for instance, nine pages from Webster's efforts to reform spelling in 1789 and eight pages on Dix's work for the mentally ill in Pennsylvania in 1845. Again, in volume two, going through the year 1968, one finds a total of nine pages from Black people, and six of these come from Booker T. Washington, while Du Bois is "represented" by a three-page snippet from a 1903 work. More space is given to Josiah Strong's opinion of "The (White) Church's Role" written in 1893 than to that given to Washington and Du Bois put together! Surely this is tokenism with a vengeance and not a successful effort, despite Professor Handlin, to "illuminate the development of the Americans."

Doubleday issued, late in 1969 and early in 1970, as Anchor Books, two volumes in the "Documents in American Civilization Series." The Series as a whole has as general editors Hennig Cohen and John William Ward; the particular volumes are *The Strenuous Decade: A Social and Intellectual Record of the Nineteen-Thirties*, edited by Daniel Aaron, Director of American Studies at Smith, and Robert Bendiner, a member of the Editorial Board of the *New York Times*; and *The 1940's: Profile of a Nation in Crisis*, edited by Chester Eisinger, Chairman of the Committee on American Studies at Purdue.

The volume of over four hundred pages devoted to the "social and intellectual record of the 1930's" contains four pages from a Black author, and these come from Richard Wright describing Joe Louis' victory over Max Baer in 1935! A few pages are devoted to Father Divine, but these are from white authors and one poem is devoted to Scottsboro—and it is from a white person! And that is the record of the Thirties!

The volume of over five-hundred pages devoted to the

1940s and subtitled "a nation in crisis" is absolutely devoid of any reference to or any word from the twenty million Black people then living in the United States—whose condition and position and demands constituted then, as they do today, a basic component in that nation's crisis.

Both volumes are profusely illustrated with scores of photographs and paintings. The 1940 volume carries nothing but white faces; the 1930 volume shows two Black men arrested in what the caption calls "Harlem Riots" and one photo of a Black family within a Chicago slum apartment.

To mark the twentieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNESCO published in 1969 *Birthright of Man: A Selection of Texts*, edited by Jeanne Hersch and coming to almost six-hundred pages. Politically, as one might expect given the auspices, all nonfascistic views are represented and the names and ideas of Marx and Lenin are not missing; similarly, the representation from Africa, Asia, and Latin America is rather full.

This volume, however, contains nothing by an Afro-American; it does carry the text of two spirituals—*Go Down, Moses* and *Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel?*—but that is as near as one gets. Concerning slavery there are some words from Montesquieu and Kosciuszko and Lincoln and Twain; there is a selection from Du Bois, but this is a fourteenth-century Frenchman! Sections are given over to Civil Liberty, Social Rights, Freedom in Practice, Servitude and Violence, Promise of Justice, but no Black person from the United States contributes a mumbling word. The editor notes that among the consultants was one U.S. citizen—Henry Steele Commager—but since his own massive *Documentary History of the United States* is utterly lily-white, Miss Hersch had a poor consultant as to this central matter in the experience of the United States.

The doctrine of "separate but equal" is as phoney in publishing as it has been in law and in reality. Fundamental to the history of the United States is the struggle of the masses of its population—of every color and every ethnic and national origin—against repression, oppression, and exploitation. Central to this record of struggle has been that waged by the Afro-American people; in so struggling, they have forged for themselves an inspiring history and they have simultaneously affected in a decisive way every aspect of the history of the United States as a whole. Every aspect of that history—whether of laborer or farmer, of student or intellectual, of the women's movement or the peace movement, whether diplomatic history or legal history or economic or political or social or ideological, whether of church or press, of cooperatives or science—everything, absolutely everything, whether looked at in some detail or examined in totality, everything that has ever appeared or ever occurred in the United States of America must be understood in terms of the relationship thereto of the Black people in the United States. To the degree that that relationship is minimized—not to speak of being ignored—to that degree the historiography is false and is racist.*

Nothing less than this must be the demand of historians and the goal of their work as we move into the final decades of the twentieth century—a generation that will, I think, mark the "final conflict" with the monster known as racism, made in the U.S.A.

June 1970

*Despite all the hullabaloo of the past ten or fifteen years, of 3,265 dissertations in modern history accepted by U.S. universities, 1960 through 1966, exactly eighteen dealt with questions of racism and/or the Afro-American; of 446 articles in the *American Historical Review*, from 1945 through 1968, exactly five dealt with the Afro-American people in any way. These data are in Howard Zinn, *The Politics of History* (Boston, 1970), p. 288n.

Part ONE

*The Central Theme of Southern History:
A Re-Examination*

One may define the South in geographical terms: from Maryland south to the tip of Florida, from the Atlantic to the western reaches of Texas; and in climatic terms: that region having longer and hotter summers, shorter and warmer winters, more humidity than any other in the United States. Noting the momentous effects locations and weather have on every aspect of living, from architecture to zoology, it remains true that geography and climate are to history what stage and props are to drama: necessary to the acting out of the play, but not the play itself.

The performers make the play, and the people make history. When we look for the dynamics of social existence—which is history—and seek to comprehend them (insisting, as we do, that they *can* be comprehended) we find ourselves searching for explications of human behavior.

In the rather clearly defined geographical and climatic entity called the South, there is also a clearly demarked history—full of complexity and variety, of course, and intertwined within a larger matrix—which, in its diversity, nevertheless has a discernible unity and is Southern history.

In 1928 a distinguished professor of American history, the late Ulrich Bonnell Phillips of Georgia, presented a paper to a meeting of the American Historical Association

tion. This paper represented the essence of some thirty years of specialized study. Entitled "The Central Theme of Southern History," no more influential paper has ever been produced in the annals of American history writing, with the exception of Frederick Jackson Turner's "Significance of the Frontier." That central theme, declared Professor Phillips, was "a common resolve indomitably maintained—that it [the South] shall be and remain a white man's country."¹

Professor Phillips' finding could not have come as a surprise to his audience, for his paper only made perfectly explicit the operating assumption of the historical fraternity for at least a generation. Professor Phillips' interpretation remains the axis around which revolves Southern history.

There has been one momentous change: Professor Phillips viewed this alleged central theme of white supremacy with great sympathy; he was, in fact, its ardent supporter. The doctrine still has, even among professional historians, numerous advocates—perhaps they yet constitute a majority of the guild—but there is an increasing number of historians, and not all are Black, who are more or less hostile to white supremacy. This is notably true of several young white Southern historians, itself an historic development.

Yet even these opponents have not seen fit to challenge the validity of Phillips' analysis; they may lament or regret his finding, but they do not reject it.² Their opposition to white supremacy makes possible an infinitely more accurate rendering of Southern history than Phillips was capable of; that they still operate on his assumption limits, I think, their powers of illumination.

The central theme of Southern history, in my opinion, is the drive of the rulers to maintain themselves in power, and the struggle against this by the oppressed and the

exploited. While not ignoring the individual, peculiar, and special features in Southern history, its fundamental motif is class struggle. This in no way excludes the particular contribution of Afro-American people to that history; on the contrary, the essence of that history is struggle for freedom against an oppressing class.

The ultimate test of this hypothesis, of course, is in its application to the data of Southern history; does it offer the best framework for these data and the most convincing generalization of their meaning? It is significant that contemporaneous Southern references to class struggle as forming the essence of the Southern experience recur in the literature. A few examples, out of the myriad available, may be offered.

In 1850 a South Carolina Congressman, J. H. Taylor, in discussing the threat to the "Southern way of life" that came from the agitation of the slavery question, went on to point to another, and related, aspect of the general threat to that "way." In the leading Southern publication, *De Bow's Review* (January 1850), Mr. Taylor wrote:

The great mass of our poor white population begin to understand that they have rights, and that they, too, are entitled to some of the sympathy which falls upon the suffering. . . . It is this great upbearing of our masses we have to fear, so far as our institutions are concerned.

Well known is the historic work of the North Carolinian, Hinton Rowan Helper, *The Impending Crisis*, published in 1857. Its whole thesis was founded on a class-struggle view of the South, tragically vitiated by a virulent racism. But Helper's book is more often cited than read, I fear, and the clarity with which this white Southerner put the class struggle of his native land is too little appreciated. Characteristic is this sentence: "Never were the poorer classes of people, and those classes so

largely in the majority, and all inhabiting the same country, so basely duped, so adroitly swindled, or so damnably outraged."

The class consciousness of the Southern elite is very marked, though, for obvious reasons, rarely expressed in public form—particularly since the end of slavery have such public expressions been rare. That a fundamentally antidemocratic and clearly class-conscious view is held among them is indubitable, and does appear in their private correspondence or their more confidential utterances. Typical are these sentences from a letter by Jonathan Worth, Governor of North Carolina from 1866 to 1868 (a Conservative who had opposed secession):

I abhor the Democratic tendency of our government. I use the word in its proper, not in its party, sense. The tendency is to ignore virtue and property and intelligence—and to put the powers of government into the hands of mere *numbers*. . . . Men will be governed by their interests. The majority in all times and in all countries are improvident and without property. Agrarianism and anarchy must be the result of this ultra democracy.³

In moments of crisis one will get public expressions of such views, especially from newspapers that become careless in the heat of significant campaigns. During the disfranchisement movements of the late 1890s and early 1900s, when the purpose of making the poor, Black and white, politically impotent was hidden behind demagogic appeals to the perils of "Negro domination," one will find such an editorial as that in the *Charlotte* (N.C.) *Observer*, June 27, 1900, hailing "the struggle of the white people of North Carolina to rid themselves of the dangers of the rule of Negroes and the lower class of whites." Here Blacks and poorer whites share the honor of being excluded from the category of "people."

The militant tradition reflected by Helper's pre-Civil

War work continued in subsequent years. Outstanding in this regard were the writings of George Washington Cable of Louisiana and of William H. Skaggs of Alabama. The latter, a veteran of the Populist struggles in the South, published in 1924 his remarkable study of *The Southern Oligarchy*, whose theme is well expressed in its subtitle: *An Appeal in behalf of the silent masses of our country against the despotic rule of the few*.

Further, it is significant that even the traditional Southern historians occasionally belied their own approach in rather unguarded statements. Relevant is U. B. Phillips' dedication of an early book,⁴ "To the Dominant Class in the South." Again, Professor David Duncan Wallace, in his *History of South Carolina*,⁵ refers at one point to the "two South Carolinas, the one of the masses, the other of the classes"; there is, however, no doubt that he concentrates on the latter, to the exclusion of the former, thus distorting that of which he does write.

These references to, or recognitions of, the centrality of class struggle in Southern history do not, however, substantiate the thesis. That substantiation requires application to the body of that history to see if it is the best frame of reference within which the facts may be generalized and given coherence.

With this view one may encompass the totality of Southern history, including those first eight decades when African-derived people never equalled more than 5 percent of the Southern population, and during which the ideology of white supremacy had hardly appeared, let alone become institutionalized.

One does not ignore the presence or the enormous consequence of white supremacist thinking and conduct. But only from the historical materialist viewpoint can its origins and full significance and the reasons for its maintenance and persistence be thoroughly comprehended.

With this view, too, the struggle *against* white supremacy—a feature of Southern history largely ignored by the Phillipsian outlook—becomes understandable. Then the Negro masses take on not a passive and parasitic role, but an active and creative one, the actual role they have played in Southern history.

In this way, also, the persistent strain of Black-white unity in Southern history, which breaks through all taboos and restrictions, is subject to investigation and understanding; not as a monstrous aberration, as with Phillips, or an isolated instance of philanthropy, but as a recurrent and momentous aspect of a class-divided South, as a prerequisite for the democratization of the South.

With this view, also, the nature of the political and economic and social struggles which have marked Southern history become clear, from the days of Nathaniel Bacon through those of the Regulators, from the days of the antiseccessionist majority through those of the Populists, from the days of the New Orleans general strike of 1892 to the Montgomery boycott of 1956.

It is the Marxian view, not the Phillipsian one, which can explain why the secessionists feared civil war at home before they could launch it against Lincoln; why more Southerners voted against the secessionist candidate, Breckinridge, in the 1860 campaign, than for him; why over two-hundred thousand Southern whites fought in the Union Army and another two hundred thousand deserted the Confederate; why 35 percent of the whites in Mississippi voted for the Radical Reconstruction government; why a million white Southerners joined the Farmers Alliance and, together with a million members of the Colored Farmers Alliance, made Populism in the South more radical than in the West; why the Knights of Labor had such outstanding success in the South; why the Progressive movement of pre-World War I days was so potent in the South; why antiwar feeling in the South

during World War I was stronger than elsewhere and reached near-insurrectionary fervor in parts of the Southwest; why today there is such deep social and political ferment in the South.

Marxism makes it possible to get at the heart of Southern Negro history, at the deepest reality of the institutions of slavery, of peonage, of jim crow. It is possible only in this way to see the organic connection between the appearance of capitalism and the enslavement of Africans; between the development of capitalism and Afro-American slavery; between the birth of imperialism and the intensification of the jim-crow oppression of Black people.

With Marxism it is possible to tear to shreds the persistent myth of a monolithic South, on which ultra-Right and ultra-“Left” unite, and to replace it with what has been real in the past and is real today—a South sorely divided between Black and white; rich and poor; debtor and creditor; big business and petty bourgeoisie. This historical materialist approach is more realistic than the Vance-Odum school of regionalists who report “regional inequalities and imbalances” and urge the development of “regional capacities and programs” and the working out of “inter-regional optima rather than drain[ing] some regions to the benefit of others.”⁶ Using regional differentials as causes rather than as results and ignoring the social bases of such differentials results in superficial history and ineffectual political therapy.

Marxism does not ignore the great force of racism in Southern life; it does not deny or minimize the power of the irrational, of the emotional, of inherited and socially induced prejudices. Rather, this view explains racism in terms of its material origins and ruling-class functions. In doing this, it points the way to principled struggle against racism and to a practical means for its complete elimination.

Though it is often accused of oversimplicity, I do not

think Marxism suffers from this, though some of its interpreters and implementers have no doubt so suffered. Marxism has room for all the complexities of actual life. It is over-simplification that V. O. Key, Jr., fears in his splendid study, *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York, 1949), when he writes in his preface that in the past commentators "have relied on a pair of caricatures" in presenting their "understanding of Southern politics." Professor Key explains:

On one hand, regional leaders are described as statesmen of the old school, sound in their economics, devoted to the Constitution, and ever alert against subversives and foolish proposals. The contrary picture is of a Southern ruling class dedicated to reaction, intent on the repression of little people, both black and white, and allied with Northern finance in a conspiracy to grind down the masses.

In both caricatures there is a grain of truth; yet each is false.

No scholar willingly presents a caricature as the truth. Yet, drop some of Key's rather loaded language—like "conspiracy"—and make clear the junior partnership status of the Southern overlords vis-à-vis the major monopolists; does one then have a caricature to be dismissed in the same terms as a fairy tale from Senator Eastland?

I do not think so. Rather, one has something very near the conclusion to which Professor Key himself comes, marred unfortunately by a one-sided presentation of white supremacy:

It is naive, of course, to interpret Southern politics as a deliberate conspiracy among the better-off whites to divide the mass of people by tolerating Negro-baiting. Nevertheless, with a high degree of regularity those of the top economic group—particularly the new industrialists—are to be found in communion with the strident advocates of white supremacy. In the political chaos and demoralization that ensue, alert men with a

sharp eye for immediate advantage take and count their gains (p. 663).

Or again:

In the combination of economic conservative and Negro-baiter against economic liberal and Negro there occurs a coalition at odds with political folklore about the South. Upper bracket Southerners habitually attribute all the trouble with the Negro to the poorer whites. Yet it is the poorer whites who support candidates favoring governmental policies for the reduction of racial discrimination and for the alleviation of racial tensions. The line is by no means, of course, sharply drawn between rich and poor, but the economic conservatives are by interest thrown on the side of those who wish to maintain discrimination, to keep alive racial antagonisms. Such policies accrue to the short-term advantage of the economic conservatives (p. 671).

In minimizing outside domination, Key is weakest in his interpretation of Southern politics. Outside domination has, in fact, permeated Southern history—with the partial exception of a thirty-year period prior to the Civil War—ever since Thomas Jefferson remarked, before the Revolution, that tobacco planters were but "a species of property" to the merchants and creditors of England. From then until the present, when the resources and laboring masses of the South are a "species of property" to the power elite, this semicolonial status of the South has been and is an historical fact.* It is intensified by the special oppression of the 35 percent of the Southern people who are black and who, largely because of this special exploitation, have developed certain attributes of an oppressed nationality.

*To the extent that the "regionalists" have called attention to this condition, and documented it, they have performed a valuable service. My earlier critical remarks were not meant in any way to detract from this.

In the area of documenting the external domination of the South, C. Vann Woodward has made one of his several major contributions to historiography. This adds a special quality to Southern history and stimulates a feeling of kinship which is certainly part of Southernism.

This facet of Southern history, as several others of varying importance—deep religiosity, a marked prevalence of violence, a relatively preferred status for the military profession—are also best explained by the Marxist thesis, and are largely outside the ken of the Phillipian approach.

There are certainly other less tangible features of the South which help make it the South. Something of this is suggested in the lines of Stephen Vincent Benet, and poetry does this subject more justice than prose:

*But something so dim that it must be holy,
A voice, a fragrance, a taste of wine . . .
Something beyond you that you must trust.
Something so shrouded it must be great.*

The Marxist respects the deep reality and profound feeling that produce such lines. The Marxist does not ignore Lincoln's "mystic chords"; he, too, responds to them. The Marxist knows that the South is not all class struggle; not all the special oppression of the Afro-American people; not all a particularly virulent male supremacy; not all the rape of its resources and the intensified exploitation of its labor power by monopoly. Nor is the South the resistance to all of this that has been offered by Southern men and women, black and white.

The South is memory, too; of food, of country road, of fresh mornings, of night so starlit one thinks it is day. Above all, the South is people, complicated as all people are and long-suffering and courageous.

Further, in an overall political sense, the South, as presently dominated, is reaction's greatest single bulwark, and this it has been for generations. But it has been this not with the agreement or even the acquiescence of most of its people. Rather, it has been reduced to this by fraud and terror and chauvinism and violence, contrary to the will of the vast majority of Southern people.

The South has several times in the past been on the verge of breaking reaction's grip (and for brief periods did break that grip). It is again on the verge of this breakaway—it is at a turning point. We have in this possibility the greatest single potential of progressive reinforcement in our country. Such a release from reaction and a flowering in the South of democracy, equality, and economic progress will be the logical culmination of its stirring history and will make of this area a region of shimmering beauty, the wonder and pride of the world.

The movement for the democratization of the South and the liberation of the Afro-American people is a movement for the South. It is in continuation of the finest traditions of Southern history, created by its greatest heroes—from Thomas Jefferson to Gabriel Prosser, from Angelina Grimke to Frederick Douglass, from George Washington Cable to Ella Mae Wiggins, from Ida B. Wells-Barnett to Claude Williams.

The Mythology of Racism

To maintain injustice requires that it be rationalized. The greater the injustice and the more prolonged its life, the more fantastic becomes its rationale. In our society, the deepest, most significant and most atrocious injustice has been the oppression of the Black people. Hence, apologizing for and bulwarking this oppression there has been developed by the ruling classes in three hundred years of American history an elaborate mythology. This mythology, in whole or in part, has infested the brains of most American white people for most of these three centuries.

Let us indicate the nature of the major components of this mythology and analyze them briefly. This is important for the system of Negro oppression has been the greatest single stain upon our country's honor; the greatest single source of human suffering; the greatest single bulwark of political reaction; the greatest single root of spreading moral decay; and the greatest single force producing division and disorganization and ideological weakness in the working class.

The system of Black oppression has played this particular role in the development of our country; therefore the struggle against the system has been at the center of all democratic and progressive effort in American history. Therefore, too, the struggle against that system represents the most sensitive area of the ruling class, and

affords the greatest opportunities for substantive political, economic, and moral advance. This is the question of questions, as John Brown said, before the slaveowners hanged him; this is the particular question for Americans in the twentieth century, as W. E. B. Du Bois saw when that century had but dawned. This century—our own, in which we must live and work and fight—must surely be the century of the burial of jim crow in our land.

Let us consider the main constituents in the mythology enveloping this system of oppression. Among the earliest and most persistent is the "curse of Ham" myth. This is a facet of the argument holding Afro-American subordination and the system of segregation to be in accordance with divine will, as recorded in biblical revelation. Actually, it is not the first of the several rationales for Black oppression; since this oppression started with slave-catching and enslavement and since this made of the Afro-American a piece of property, the earliest rationale of the lucrative business was one which denied his humanity. If the Black was to be held in ownership like a horse or a cow, it would be delightful if he were—or if it could be believed that he were—in no substantive regard different from such animals.

This idea of bestiality has persisted in the remoter recesses of the bigot's mind. Mormons barred Negroes from membership on the grounds that they had no soul or, at any rate, not a first-class soul; the White Citizens' Councils will choose language evoking this concept; vestiges of it appear quite widely in "jokes" and superstitions.

Though myths persist despite their divergence from reality, this was so manifestly insane that it had to be replaced by a more durable one. After all, it was not necessary to pass laws forbidding *horses* to learn how to read, and the issue from cohabitation that white masters forced upon Black women seemed to be *children*! More-

over, if the Negro were human, he would be possessed of a soul, and saving his soul would give the Christian a good reason for enslaving him, so that he might convert him.

Hence it was generally granted by the eighteenth century that he was human, but in a damaged and much inferior sort of way, that was of his nature, inherited and immutable. This was "proven" by torturing "appropriate" passages from the Bible to suit the ends of slaveowners intent upon justifying their institution. The passage especially hit upon was the so-called "curse of Ham" (in Genesis), but even the biblical scholarship here is at fault, for the curse was not of Ham, but of Canaan, one of the four sons of Ham, and Old Testament experts are agreed that he was white.

Dr. T. B. Maston, for almost forty years professor of ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, in his *Segregation and Desegregation: A Christian Approach* (New York, 1961), writes on this point:

The only reason to give any space to "the curse of Ham" is the fact that so many people are using it today to justify the present pattern, just as their forefathers used it to defend slavery. The use of the curse stems, to a considerable degree, from the rather common tendency for men, and particularly for Christian men, to want divine approval for what they do, what they want to do, or what they think it is necessary for them to do. . . . All of us, at times, are entirely too prone to clothe our sins in the garments of sanctity by an appeal to the Bible (p. 99).

James McBride Dabbs of South Carolina, former president of the Southern Regional Council, remarked rather gently, that if the slaveowners were in error to use this "curse of Ham" argument to justify slavery—and he assumed, perhaps too readily, that this will be granted—then those who use it today to justify jim crow might also

be in error.¹ While such reasoning may help, it nevertheless is important—particularly for those swayed in terms of faith by a literal examination of the Bible's text—to note that the leading ministerial authorities on the Old and New Testament, such as the aforementioned Professor Maston, and Liston Pope, Everett Tilson, and Albertus Pieters, agree that no justification of any sort is offered in the Bible for segregation; that, on the contrary, that book and Christian teaching in general stand opposed to segregation as sinful. This is, in fact, one of the most potent forces undercutting adherence to segregation. Remembering how powerful were most of the churches before the Civil War in combatting abolitionism by insisting upon divine sanction for slavery, we realize how significant is the contrary verdict on jim crow from almost all churches today.²

In our more secular era, "scientific" myths have greater influence. These myths fall into historical, anatomical, anthropological, and psychological categories; all strongly reinforced by a misreading of Darwinism to justify political backwardness, moral ferocity, avid acquisitiveness, and social injustice; and especially because of the biological base of Darwinism, the subordination of the Black, exactly on the grounds of natural—i.e., *biological*—inferiority.

Just as the religious apologia was related to the rise of capitalism, the rape of Africa, and the use of forced labor for the exploitation of the New World, so the "scientific" apologia was related to the Asian and African colonialism of monopoly capitalism. In particular, in our country, it was related to maturing capitalism's taking over the wealth of the South, with its millions of especially oppressed Negro workers.

Every aspect of the "scientific" argument has been utterly demolished by scientific investigators, quite as thoroughly as the "curse of Ham" has been refuted by

principled theologians. The denial of a significant, noble, creative, and militant culture and history on the part of the African peoples, and of their descendants in the New World, has been smashed, and no one but an ignoramus—or the Chairman of the Judiciary Committee of the U.S. Senate—is able to persist, publicly, in the contrary view. The ascribing of arrested anatomical—and especially cranial—development to the African and the Afro-American has been proven beyond the possibility of doubt to be completely false. Similarly, the ascribing of inferior “intelligence” to the Negro is in error and here, though one gets hedging by people like Gunnar Myrdal and James M. Dabbs to the effect that inferiority has neither been proven nor disproven, the fact is that the weight of the considerable evidence collected is overwhelmingly in the direction of opposing the concept of inferior intelligence.

This position, in the area of science, is relatively new—as is the overwhelmingly antiracist position taken officially by all leading religious organizations—and has played a considerable part in assisting the Black liberation movement, as the advance of that movement has been decisive in inspiring scientific progress.*

Repeatedly, the advocate of desegregation is met with the reply that segregation is the result of a natural or instinctual drive of like for like, of like discriminating against and despising the unlike. It is possible that there may be a common response of suspicion, within exploitative and oppressive societies, to the coming of the stranger, but this would appear to be socially induced. Where the order is more nearly communal, the original reaction to newcomers is one of curiosity, friendship, and hos-

*Among Americans, outstanding pioneers in this scientific work were W. E. B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson, in history; Franklin P. Mall, in anatomy; Franz Boas, in anthropology; and Otto Klineberg, in psychology.

pitality, as was true, for example, when the Indians first met the white man coming to the New World.

Moreover, the response of suspicion and even hostility, when offered in the remote past, seems not to have been mixed with any sense of contempt, and certainly had no quality of modern racism, with its insistence upon innate and immutable inferiority to justify perpetual subordination. That feeling, which we now know as racism, is a distinctly modern phenomenon and comes into being as capitalism develops and moves toward the subjugation and colonialization of the darker peoples of the world.³

None of the historical evidence tends to show that there is an instinctual or natural source for the racism which smears our country. On the contrary, all the evidence shows the general absence of this ideology in the ancient and medieval world, and the gradual development of it and insistence upon its observance by the ruling classes of the early capitalist period, starting in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century.

Were racism natural or instinctual, it would appear of itself and would maintain itself. It is a fact that many people suffer from the illusion that this is the circumstance in connection with jim crow; that, somehow, as one moves south of the Mason-Dixon line (called the Smith and Wesson line by many) segregation just sprouts up from the ground, like the flora native to the region; or that, just as it gets warmer as one goes south, so jim crow appears in the same area. On the basis of this idea, it is repeatedly insisted—even by presidents of the United States—that one cannot legislate a particular morality or code of conduct and that any effort to alter the jim crow pattern, assuming it should be made, would have to be one of extreme gradualism and confined to the most gentle forms of moral suasion and education.

All such views are grievously wrong. It is not true that jim crow patterns appear wherever colored and white

peoples come together; in all of Latin America, for example, this pattern is more or less absent; where it is present it appears in much more muted forms than in the United States, and often even in these forms because of the directly traceable influence of U.S. pressure. It is not even true that the jim crow pattern appeared in our own colonies as soon as the presence of both African and European (or Indian and European) became a fact. On the contrary, the first response of the people—especially the common people—was one of friendship and comradeship; the separation had to be instituted through economic, social, and legal pressures by the ruling classes over a period of about two or three generations.

The inferior status of the Black in the South prior to the Civil War was a matter of law, of course, and this law was enforced with the greatest severity. The law was complex and ingenious and covered every conceivable contingency: the outlawry of intermarriage; prohibiting free Blacks from voting and from certain pursuits and professions; forbidding them—free and slave—from testifying under oath in a court; forbidding the education of slaves and inhibiting severely the education of free Blacks; forbidding the unfettered movement of the Black—altogether forbidden with the slave and sharply circumscribed with the free. One could go on for many pages⁴ simply enumerating the whole legal framework of Negro subordination present prior to the Civil War. Basic to everything was the economic relationship, upon which was reared not only the law, but the whole state apparatus, including the armed forces, and the entire dominant ideological apparatus, especially of religion.

During Reconstruction and for about fifteen years after the overthrow of Reconstruction, all segregatory laws were repealed, and many Southern states passed civil rights laws forbidding and punishing any public manifestation of discrimination (South Carolina, in particular,

had a strong civil rights law until 1889). The institution of the modern system of hundreds of racist laws throughout the South (and not a few in the North and West) began in the last years of the 1880s and continued intensively until the adoption, in 1910, of the Oklahoma constitution. The modern jim crow legal system, then, is not more than seventy years old, and came into being at the same time as the transformation of U.S. industrial capitalism into monopoly capitalism; it is a facet of the taking over of the South by newly developed American imperialism.

The man-made and ruling-class-made structure of the American system of jim crow is indubitable. Segregation, far from being the result of instinctual or natural tendency, clearly is the product of an economic system of special oppression, bulwarked with a complex legal, social, ideological system which justifies such terrible oppression.

Those who insist that one cannot legislate morality should bear in mind that immorality has been legislated. Those who insist that one cannot, by law, fight against social custom should bear in mind that social custom and, most certainly, the jim crow setup in the South has been dependent upon the existence of particular laws.

Ruling classes invariably believe that their systems are immortal; the fact that they have been proven wrong time after time does not keep new rulers from repeating this error. The idea stems from the conviction that their system is splendid, reasonable, and in accordance with divine or natural will; it is not likely to be shaken by the fact that they derive great pleasure and satisfaction from ruling.

Hence the masters of exploitative and oppressive systems always insist that internal threats to their stability must derive from sources outside the systems. Such a decision offers no invidious verdict upon their dearly

treasured system nor their own stewardship; it has the added virtue of making the foe alien as well as somewhat nebulous, so that his existence may serve many ends, not the least of which may be justification for aggression, or as lightning rod for real domestic turmoil.

The tendency to blame "outside agitators" will be intensified when the oppressed suffer severely; it will be intensified to the highest degree if, in addition, those who suffer are alleged to be barely human, and if the rulers insist that a proof of their lower humanity is that they love slavery and hug their chains. The rulers of the South, both before the Civil War and since the restoration of the Bourbons down to our own day, have especially insisted, at every sign of popular unrest, that its source was from the "outside"—the damn North or the damn British or the damn French or the damn Bolsheviks, the particular target differing at times, occasionally several targets being fired at simultaneously.

The fact is that the basic source of unrest among oppressed lies in the oppression. Northern abolitionists, when charged with provoking slave plots and uprisings prior to the Civil War, had a decisive reply. They told the slaveowners they knew a method which would absolutely guarantee no more slave revolts. They warned, however, that they also knew that were this method not adopted, slave revolts and plots would occur, no matter what else the masters might do. The magical formula was: If you would end slave rebellions, end slavery.

This does not mean that the slaves were not conscious of, and inspired by—at least some among them, and to some degree—such stirring events as the American Revolution, or the French Revolution, or the Haitian Revolution, or Mexico's abolition of slavery, or the British emancipating the slaves in the West Indies, or the rise of a mass emancipationist movement in Great Britain, or the growth of a significant Abolitionist movement in the

northern United States. They did know of these events and they were inspired, strengthened, and given fresh sources of hope. But in almost no cases were there "outside agitators." The central source of the slaves' struggles, in the dozens of ways they did struggle, came from their own hearts and nerves, from their own inextinguishable passion for an end to slavery.

Today, too, the Black people in the United States, and in the South certainly, know of the heroic struggles of their African and Cuban brothers; they know of the titanic struggles of the Arab peoples and of the world-shaking events in Asia. They know, too, of the Bolshevik revolution, of how the Soviet Union, above all others, saved humanity from the racist monstrosity of Hitlerism, and how that enormous multinational and multicolored land has leaped forward into the front ranks of powers after fifty years.

All humanity is one—despite the insistence of the segregationists—and of course the liberation struggles from one component of that whole inspire other components. Americans should be the last people in the world to be surprised at this since the English, Irish, Dutch, and, above all, French, assistance and inspiration were decisive to the success of our own revolution. But is the Declaration of Independence any less American because its creator drew many thoughts from the noblest ideas of earlier geniuses in other lands? Is Yorktown not an American victory, decisive for the achievement of our nation's independence because, without the participation of French men and ships, it could never have happened?

The Afro-American people, like all other people, will be satisfied with nothing less than full and complete freedom and they, like all other peoples, will draw strength and fervor for this fearfully difficult undertaking from whatever source seems to them most helpful. This

has nothing to do with Eastland's idiot-ranting about "outside agitators"; it has to do with a law of human progress that has operated throughout history and operates today.

In our secular age, the Curse of God explanation for the oppression of the Black people, and the jim crow system bulwarking that oppression, is no longer fully effective. While it continues to have weight with many hidebound white religionists, their numbers are steadily declining; moreover, from within, a less racist interpreting of the sacred texts is becoming more and more common.

At the same time the Curse of Nature explanation has been falling into disrepute as modern scientific inquiry—itsself part of the decline of imperialism and the rise of socialism—has demonstrated in one field after another the untenability of racist views.

While both these Curses still retain considerable potency in corrupting the American White Mind, they have been significantly diluted, especially among liberal-minded white people. For these reformistically inclined and moderationist folk, a more sophisticated myth—one which would save them from the heresy of radicalism—has been provided with a rationalization for the monstrosity of jim crow.

This myth, particularly widespread among more enlightened white professional and middle-class groupings, may be called the Curse of Nurture. It may be substantiated with very elaborate statistical charts and impressive two-volume works; it will focus upon sociological phenomena and so carry with it at once an apparently objective and scientific aspect. It will also obviously fit in with the tinkering and "good government" and commission-of-inquiry approach that form the tactics of "moderation," that are, in other words, splendid instruments for delay and sharp tools forging acquiescence. Not least among its virtues is the fact that

it affords endless opportunities for "detailed studies" lavishly financed by tax-deductible grants, simultaneously gratifying philanthropic impulses and career making needs.

The textbook for this school is Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and American Democracy*⁵ (1944). Analytically, the core of this work lies in what its author calls the "vicious circle" theory. The natural inferiority of the Black is taken to be unproven (though not necessarily untrue), but his socially induced inferiority is held to be a palpable fact. Starting with this "fact," the segregation of the Black which induced it is simultaneously a consequence of it; for his real inferiority—even if its cause be mainly social—makes him an unpleasant neighbor, to be blunt about it, and hence pressures arise for his segregation. This develops added inferiority, which intensifies the urge toward discrimination, which further accentuates the inferiority—and so on forever and forever. Indeed, a vicious circle.

Like a circle, neither a beginning nor an end is discernible. In place of real causation is offered a description of things as they are, and from this description is extracted an "explanation" for its being. The source of the oppression is explained by calling oppression by the euphonious title, "socially-induced inferiority," and then insisting that the latter "causes" the former.

The socially induced inferiority of the Myrdalian school is nothing but oppression and poverty; what it is, in fact, and what the bulk of Myrdal's fifteen hundred pages are devoted to demonstrating, is that the Black is paid least, fired first, hired last, most poorly housed, least educated, most often ill, most often jailed, and that he dies earliest. This *is* the system of jim crow; one does not elucidate the source of the system by renaming its consequences and then asserting that *that* is the "cause" of the system in the first place!

Having no beginning, the vicious circle has no end; and one cannot tell in what way to bring an end to that without end. All this fits in with the Myrdalian idea that "everything is cause to everything else"; it suits perfectly a program of excruciating patience, high-level politicking, and the absence of mass action directed at the elimination of real grievances and the achievement of fundamental advances.

Incidentally, the development of a fairly substantial Black bourgeoisie and professional group tends to embarrass the Curse of Nurture mythologists; what does one do with those obviously not "cursed"? The reply is: One seeks to win them over and wean them away from their own masses. So profound and incisive a Black scholar as the late Professor E. Franklin Frazier found in his *Black Bourgeoisie* (Glencoe, 1957) that this had been accomplished. The present writer finds it impossible to agree, and feels this much too pessimistic as to the present and in error in projecting the future. Recent developments tend to show that the faltering and vacillating elements within the Black bourgeoisie may well be left behind as generals without troops; increasingly, the rank and file are acting for themselves, developing their own leaders, their own tactics, and their own basic demands.* This is in tune with—and in part responsive to—developments in the rest of the "Free World"; there is every indication that the future will see still more rapid development of that process and not its reversal.

It is important to observe that while capitalist prosper-

*The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, at a meeting sponsored by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, held in Raleigh in mid-April 1962, made this quite explicit. Referring to the student sit-in movement, he said: "It is a revolt against those Negroes in the middle class who have indulged themselves in the big cars and ranch-style homes rather than in joining a movement for freedom." He added: "This is an era of offensive on the part of oppressed people. All peoples deprived of dignity and freedom are on the march on every continent throughout the world."

ity has to a degree improved the absolute living conditions of large numbers of Black people, recent government figures still place the average annual income of Black families at \$2,711, about half the figure required for a "minimum standard of decency." While unemployment has been a pressing problem for a varying percentage of white workers, it has been a keen problem for double the percentage of Black workers; while about one in fourteen white workers are unemployed, about one in seven or eight Black workers are out of work. Of decisive importance in comprehending the temper of the Negro people is the fact—as pointed out by Lester B. Granger of the National Urban League in April 1961—that the Black family income actually deteriorated in the 1950s *as compared with the income of the white*. It amounted to 54 percent of the white in 1950, and only 51 percent of the white in 1958.*

Fundamentally, the Curse of Nurture idea is related to the basic rationalization that exploiters have used for their systems even before the modern refinement of racism was concocted: the poor are poor because they are no good—reflecting the dual meaning of the word *poor* (without money and without merit). Rulers and their apologists have always seen nothing but degrading and enervating effects stemming from oppression; they have missed altogether the ennobling, strengthening impact, and the growth of a feeling of solidarity and selflessness. In addition, they altogether ignore the integral relationship between the cause of justice and the cause of the oppressed. At the same time these rulers cannot appreciate the decaying effect that their position and their role have upon themselves socially, ideologically, and ethically.

The dominant press and the drawing rooms of wealthy

*This essay was originally published in the spring of 1969; today's figures differ, of course, but proportions have changed little.

whites, North and South, are buzzing with worried and puzzled references to the "New Negro." The usage, containing elements of rather grudging respect or awe, at the same time contains invidious content so far as the parents, grandparents, and ancestors of the present front-line fighters in the Black liberation struggle are concerned. Some of this emphasis on the "New Negro" is filled with chauvinistic ignorance or fantastic misinformation about the history and character of the Afro-American people.

Significantly, this idea of the "New Negro" recurs in the history of the United States. The Black liberation struggle, while constant as the Mississippi River, tends to be especially turbulent at particular times, just like Old Man River. Invariably, these high points of struggle evoked expressions of alarm and puzzlement, and regret that the "Old Time Negro"—concocted in the master's dreams—had disappeared. One gets this in the colonial press from 1720 through 1740; in the press of the young republic from 1790 to 1802; the slaveowners scream that the damned Abolitionists have created a "New Negro" from 1821 to 1832. So it goes through the Civil War and Reconstruction, the Populist movement, Niagara and the founding of the NAACP, the renaissance of the 1920s, the militancy of the New Deal. Now we are back again, learning nothing, admitting nothing, understanding nothing, gaping with wonder at the "New Negro" who seems really affronted by jim crow and wants to vote and live decently and drink a democratic cup of coffee and get a good education for his children.

The inspiring Black youth of today are the true sons and daughters of heroic parents and grandparents, who themselves learned courage, endurance, ingenuity, and the will to be free from *their* parents and grandparents before them.

"Liberty or Death" was the slogan of Gabriel Prosser, the twenty-two-year-old blacksmith of Virginia in 1800;

"Die silent as you shall see me do" was the cry of one slave prisoner to another as he saw his comrade begin to yield to the torture devices of the Charleston police in 1822; "I do not feel *guilty*" was Nat Turner's reply in 1831 to the slaveholders who came to torment him, loaded down with chains as he was in a Virginia jail. Tens of thousands fled slavery, moving only by night, advertised for like mad dogs, able to trust not a soul, covering hundreds and even thousands of miles, and made it, year after year. In making it, they forged the greatest single epoch of perseverance and sheer bravery in the history of the United States. And ignoramuses, who tremble at a loud noise and find their courage only when, as part of an armed mob, they are lynching a single unarmed Black, marvel at the "New Negro"!

This insistence on the "New Negro" plays into the hands of the gradualists and moderationists, too, for it carries with it the idea that this "New Negro" is too impatient. This has a certain logic to it, if indeed the Black people in the past were content with their chains and adored jim crow; if now, suddenly, something "new" had appeared and change is wanted all of a sudden! But, of course, the chains have been worn *and have rankled* for over three hundred years.

Now, more than a decade after the Supreme Court called for "all deliberate speed" in the eradication of segregated education, over 90 percent of the Southern schools remain completely segregated; in most of the others, desegregation has been token. Certainly there has been deliberation here, but what about the speed? Moderationism and gradualism have always been devices for thwarting significant change, for curbing the wrath of the masses, for maintaining, with only the essential concession and elasticity, the system of exploitation and indignity. If further proof were needed, the history of the years since the 1954 decision of the United States Supreme Court is that proof.

Is there anything at all new about the Afro-American movement today and the temper of the Black people? Of course there is, as Frederick Douglass differed from Nat Turner, and Martin Luther King from Richard Allen. One essential is not "new." From Richard Allen in the eighteenth century to Nat Turner in the nineteenth to Frederick Douglass of the Civil War and Reconstruction epochs to the battlers of today, the inspiration has been the passion for freedom, and the goad has been the discontent with slavery and second-class citizenship.

Frederick Douglass, for a time, finally got most of the country and the United States government educated to the point of seeing that his demands were necessary for the national interests as a whole; instead of hanging him for seeking what Nat Turner sought, the President invited him to the White House to seek his advice as to how best to eliminate slavery and save the Republic.

Today the liberation of the Afro-American people in the United States has gained the deepest sympathy of all enlightened mankind; and in one-third of the world enlightened mankind constitutes the ruling power, the states, the governments. In much of the rest of the world—Africa, in the first place, and Southeast Asia, Italy, France, Great Britain, and Latin America—the government of the United States finds itself measured and condemned by what it does and does not do as far as the Black people are concerned. At home the numbers of white people who wish the Negro people well in their struggles count many millions; increasingly, also, tens of thousands among them are understanding the basic connection between their own welfare, the progress of the nation, the security of world peace, and the elimination of the jim crow system.

So now the Afro-American people, over twenty million strong and over three hundred years denied their freedom—having behind them centuries of splendid history, magnificent leadership, and immortal sacrifice;

feeling the rising swell of international comradeship in a world moving irresistibly toward full popular sovereignty; sensing the increasing good will of millions of fellow Americans who are white and, at least, the growing uncertainty of other millions of white Americans as to the righteousness and viability of racism; knowing their own decisive power in the trade union movement and in the politics of the nation; comprehending the instrument that lies in their economic might, both as consumers and as producers—now they are striking out without compromise and with intense seriousness for "all the marbles," for full equality and control over their own destiny in our own time.

This movement carries within it enormous potential—for smashing the two-party system and really revitalizing American politics, for organizing the South and invigorating the entire trade union movement, for basic political and social changes in the South and in the North. *The successful struggle against slavery saved the soul and the body of our Republic once; the successful struggle against racism can save the soul and the body of our Republic again.*

Arna Bontemps, the Black novelist and poet—of the age of the fathers of the present generation of militant black youth—in a fine poem, *A Black Man Talks of Reaping*, spoke of "my children" who "feed on bitter fruit." On this food they have become strong men and women, as another poet Sterling A. Brown—also of that older generation—said in his poem *Strong Men*:

*What, from the slums
Where they have hemmed you,
What, from the tiny huts
They could not keep from you—
What reaches them
Making them ill at ease, fearful?
Today they shout prohibitions at you*

"Thou shalt not this"

"Thou shalt not that"

"Reserved for whites only"

You laugh.

One thing they cannot prohibit—

The strong men . . . coming on

The strong men gittin' stronger

Strong men . . .

Stronger . . .

Amen.

«III»

Du Bois as Historian

Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois was more a historymaker than an historian. The two were intertwined, however; what interested Du Bois as a maker of history helped determine what he wrote and what he wrote helped make history.

Du Bois was an agitator-prophet. He tore at the Veil; at the same time, behind that Veil, he had a particular perspective from which he saw this country and world, past, present, and future, differently—more truly, I think, but certainly in a manner different from the conventional and the dominant. His main formal training—fairly strong in mathematics, languages, psychology, philosophy, and economics—was especially thorough in history.¹ As historian, dedicated to the most rigorous standards of integrity, he remained, nevertheless, agitator-prophet. Present was another fundamental ingredient in the man—namely, the poet. Professor Charles H. Wesley, in the course of producing perhaps the most penetrating review of Du Bois' *Black Reconstruction*, caught this aspect very well indeed when he referred to Du Bois as "the lyric historian."²

Du Bois' extraordinary career manifests a remarkable continuity. From his 1890 Harvard Commencement address³ to his posthumously published *Autobiography*,⁴ the essential theme is the beauty, rationality, and need of service and equality, and the ugliness, irrationality, and

threat of greed and elitism. Because of the especially oppressed condition of the colored peoples of the earth, particularly the African and African-derived peoples, Du Bois believed in their capacity for compassion and comradeship or, as he put it in the 1890 speech, "for the cool, purposeful *Ich Dien* of the African." Keenly conscious of color and of consequent discrimination, convinced of his own capacities, and wedded to the idea of service—Du Bois never shed New England—he told himself as a graduate student in Berlin on his twenty-fifth birthday: "The general proposition of working for the world's good becomes too soon sickly sentimentality. I therefore take the world that the Unknown lay in my hands & work for the rise of the Negro people, taking for granted that their best development means the best development of the world. . . . These are my plans: to make a name in science, to make a name in literature and thus to raise my race."⁵

Our present task is to follow Du Bois as historian. How did he conceive of history? The basic answer comes from his writings, and an enormous, almost incredible corpus they are.⁶ While not all of it by any means represents history writing, almost all of it, including the novels, does illustrate in one way or another Du Bois' view of history.

For Du Bois, history writing was *writing*; one who produces a book should try thereby to produce *literature*. He drove himself hard on this. All authors are anxious to see their work in print; crusading authors probably feel this anxiety more than others (if there are others!). Yet Du Bois wrote and rewrote his massive *Black Reconstruction* three times and after that revised and revised and cut and cut (as much as two hundred-fifty pages were cut by him in the summer of 1934)⁷. In this connection he informed Charles Pearce—the person in charge of his manuscript at Harcourt, Brace—on July 10, 1933, that he had written

his Reconstruction book a second time, but that it was not satisfactory for two reasons: "Its present length would require at least two volumes"; and "It is not yet a piece of literature. It still resembles . . . a Ph.D. thesis, well documented and with far too many figures. I have clearly in mind the sort of thing that I want to do and I think I can accomplish it but that means writing the book again."

Somewhat later, explaining to his publisher why his galley corrections were so numerous, Du Bois wrote: "My method of writing is a method of after-thoughts. I mean that after all the details of commas, periods, spelling . . . there comes the final and to me the most important work of polishing and resetting and even restating. This is the crowning of my creative process."⁸

Du Bois was explicit in his belief that while living behind the Veil might carry the danger of provincialism, it had the great advantage of helping disclose truth or neglected aspects of reality exactly because its point of observation differed. There was something else. Du Bois not only held that a new vantage point offered new insights, but also that a racist viewpoint was a blighted one; that it could not fail to distort reality; that an explicitly antiracist viewpoint was not only different but better. He insisted that the view—or prejudice, if one wishes—which he brought to data would get closer to reality not only because it was fresh but also because it was egalitarian. One gets a somewhat different shading in at least one passage in Du Bois' writing where he suggests that possibly something "in between" may be nearer the truth. It occurs in *Black Folk: Then and Now* (New York, 1939, p. ix) and requires quotation in full:

I do not for a moment doubt that my Negro descent and narrow group culture have in many cases predisposed me to interpret my facts too favorably for my race; but there is little danger of long misleading here, for the champions of white folk are

legion. The Negro has long been the clown of history; the football of anthropology; and the slave of industry. I am trying to show here why these attitudes can no longer be maintained. I realize that the truth of history lies not in the mouths of partisans but rather in the calm Science that sits between. Her cause I seek to serve, and where-ever I fail, I am at least paying Truth the respect of earnest effort.

On this ground, too, he tended to justify—even excuse—his practice of depending largely upon published sources and graduate papers rather than upon manuscript materials. He noted particular discriminatory problems facing Black scholars and authors in his own case, problems of money and time, given his myriad activities.⁹ In *Black Reconstruction*, having written in the preface that he meant to retell the history of the years from 1860 to 1880 “with especial reference to the efforts and experiences of the Negroes themselves,” he added that he was “going to tell this story as though Negroes were ordinary human beings, realizing that this attitude will from the first seriously curtail my audience.” And in the body of the text (p. 724) he apologized for having “depended very largely upon secondary material,” named collections of papers that he was sure would contain relevant materials, acknowledged that the “weight of this work would have been vastly strengthened” had they been consulted, for which he had had neither “time nor opportunity.” Nevertheless, standing as he did “literally aghast” (p. 725) at what racist historiography had done in this field, his own effort certainly must represent a significant and needed corrective.

A generation earlier, in the preface to his *John Brown* (1909), Du Bois made a substantially similar point and added a thought which still awaits comprehension by most in the historical profession:

After the work of Sanborn, Hinton, Connelley, and Redpath,

the only excuse for another life of John Brown is an opportunity to lay new emphasis upon the material which they so carefully collected, and to treat these facts from a different point of view. The view-point adopted in this book is that of the little known but vastly important inner development of the Negro American. John Brown worked not simply for Black Men—he worked with them; and he was a companion of their daily life, knew their faults and virtues, and felt, as few white Americans have felt, the bitter tragedy of their lot.

Du Bois saw the neglect of, or prejudice against, the Negro in American historiography as an aspect of a prevailing elitism in dominant history writing in general. Du Bois felt that the assumption linking the well born with the able was no more than an assumption; that to insist the poor's incapacity was demonstrated in their poverty was, at best, elliptical argument. His ironic response to the way dominant history deplored the suffering of the elite in periods of decisive social change or challenge—as Reconstruction—and its blithe ignoring of or apologizing for the age-long crucifixion of the poor reminds one of the celebrated passage in Mark Twain's *Connecticut Yankee*; Du Bois' image, too, comes from the French Revolution: “In all this,” he wrote in *Black Reconstruction* (p. 353), “one sees the old snobbery of class judgment in new form—tears and sentiment for Marie Antoinette on the scaffold, but no sign of grief for the gutters of Paris and the fields of France, where the victims of exploitation and ignorance lay rotting in piles.” (See also p. 206.)

Sometimes Du Bois made this aspect of his philosophy of history perfectly explicit; thus: “We have the record of kings and gentlemen *ad nauseam* and in stupid detail; but of the common run of human beings, and particularly of the half or wholly submerged working group, the world has saved all too little of authentic record and tried to forget or ignore even the little saved.”¹⁰

Du Bois in practice resolved the difficult problems of objectivity and partisanship, of truth and justice, of the moral and the scientific by affirming—perhaps “assuming”—would be more exact, for the argument is never quite explicit—that separating morals from science caricatures the latter, that the just is the true, and that while objectivity in the sense of utter neutrality in any meaningful matter is absurd this does not rule out the describing of reality—of “telling it like it is”; that, rather, the solution to the apparent paradox has a paradoxical twist: it is intense partisanship, on the side of the exploited and therefore on the side of justice, that makes possible the grasping of truth. That partisanship is, at least, the highway leading to that accumulation of knowledge which brings one closer and closer to the real but not reachable final truth.

At times Du Bois does separate the function of description and interpretation even to affirm—in a way reminiscent of his late nineteenth-century German training—that it is necessary (and possible) for an historian to “make clear the facts with utter disregard to his own wish and desire and belief,” that “we have got to know, so far as possible” the “things that actually happened in the world” and then “with that much clear and open to every reader, the philosopher and prophet has a chance to interpret these facts” (*Black Reconstruction*, p. 722). Yet, in practice, he combines the philosopher and the prophet with the historian, else the latter will become a clerk rather than a scientist; indeed, few writing in the area of American history have accomplished this combination so effectively as did Du Bois.

In a book review that Du Bois published in the *American Historical Review*, lamenting what he thought were failures, he illuminated his own views on historiography; the succinctness necessary to the review form leads to a certain clarity of expression. Du Bois regretted

that in the study in question he could find “no sense of unity or growth, no careful digestion or arrangement of his material, no conception of the inner reactions of this changing and developing group of human beings, and no comprehension of the drama involved.”

In connection with “drama,” Du Bois added: “Some social scientists seem to think that because the scientist may not be emotional he has, therefore, no call to study emotion. This, of course, is a ridiculous *non-sequitur*.”¹¹

In *Black Reconstruction* (pp. 714–715) a few paragraphs devoted to the Beards’ *Rise of American Civilization* illuminate Du Bois’ concept of history and offer penetrating criticisms of the Beards’ work. Reading it, said Du Bois, one had “the comfortable feeling that nothing right or wrong is involved.” Two differing systems develop in the North and the South, Du Bois continued, and “they clash, as winds and waters strive.” The “mechanistic interpretation” failed because human experience was not mechanistic. Furthermore—and here we get again Du Bois’ insistence on “drama” as the heart of history—in such a presentation

there is no room for the real plot of the story, for the clear mistake and guilt of building a new slavery of the working class in the midst of a fateful experiment in democracy; for the triumph of sheer moral courage and sacrifice in the abolition crusade; and for the hurt and struggle of degraded black millions in their fight for freedom and their attempt to enter democracy. Can all this be omitted or half suppressed in a treatise that calls itself scientific?

Du Bois had a towering sense of the right, of the just, a basic faith in reason, and a passionate commitment toward achieving the just through the use of reason. Indeed, all this together is what Du Bois meant by that word which to him was most sacred: *science*. In his lifetime and in his experience the central lie was racism;

this, therefore, received the brunt of his blows. "As a student of science," he wrote (in *Black Reconstruction*, p. 725), "I want to be fair, objective and judicial; to let no searing of the memory by intolerable insult and cruelty make me fail to sympathize with human frailties and contradiction, in the eternal paradox of good and evil."

What, he asked, should be the object of writing history—the history of Reconstruction, for example?

Is it to wipe out the disgrace of a people which fought to make slaves of Negroes? Is it to show that the North had higher motives than freeing black men? Is it to prove that Negroes were black angels? No, it is simply to establish the Truth, on which Right in the future might be built.

With all this one understands that Du Bois could never accept the idea that cause and effect was nothing but a manmade myth; he caustically rejected this idea which attracted much attention early in the 1940s, especially with Charles Beard's abandonment of causation. He labelled this "asinine frivolity" and thought it "must cease if the decadence of the age is not to become definitive and irreversible." In this same essay, Du Bois, again decrying a mechanistic outlook, insisted that for the historian causation must be "conceived in truly humanistic, dynamic terms." He repudiated the heritage of Ranke only insofar as it had "become so exaggerated as to tend to dehumanize it." The historian, Du Bois held, must believe "that creative human initiative, working outside mechanical sequence, directs and changes the course of human action and so history . . . it is man who causes movement and change."¹² Du Bois did not mean here that man functioned independently of his circumstances; rather he was created by and created them. Thus Du Bois' work is filled with the pressure of such circumstance—notably, but by no means solely, the economic. An example from his first professional history

paper delivered before the annual meeting of this association in this same city in 1891 must suffice:¹³

If slave labor was an economic god, then the slave trade was its strong right arm; and with Southern planters recognizing this and Northern capital unfettered by a conscience it was almost like legislating against economic laws to attempt to abolish the slave trade by statutes.

As historian, Du Bois' first concern, one he never lost, was the rigorous study of the Afro-American's past. The preface to his first book (published in 1896), before its paragraph of acknowledgments, closes with this thought: "I nevertheless trust that I have succeeded in rendering this monograph a small contribution to the scientific study of slavery and the American Negro."¹⁴

Somewhat later he articulated another basic working hypothesis in his approach to history; he began his *Black Reconstruction* (p. 3) by offering its reader the opinion that the experience of Negro people "became a central thread in the history of the United States, at once a challenge to its democracy and always an important part of its economic history and social development."

His penetrating observation, first offered in 1900 and twice repeated in a significant article published the next year¹⁵—"The problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line"—was fundamental to his vision of the unity of all African peoples. As Du Bois advanced in years, he felt the idea itself was preliminary to the unity of all the darker peoples of the earth and *that* was part of the process of the worldwide unification of all who labor. The idea was first enunciated as the Call of the original Pan-African Conference. This insight forms the inspiration for and thesis of his *The Negro* (London, 1915), *Black Folk, Then and Now* (New York, 1939), *Color and Democracy: Colonies and Peace* (New York, 1945), *The World and Africa* (New York, 1947), most completely in

the enlarged edition of that volume published two years after his death.¹⁶

How shall we sum up Du Bois' conception of history? There is the facile technique of labels, normally unsatisfactory, and, in the case of a man as polemical, radical, and productive as Du Bois, bound to be especially unsatisfactory. This does not mean the labelling has not been done, of course, and not simply by a berserk government that said Du Bois was, of all things, an "unregistered foreign agent"!

Two historians were not only convinced that Du Bois was a Marxist; they felt able to tell their readers just when his baptism occurred. Harvey Wish wrote that Dr. Du Bois went to the U.S.S.R. in 1927—which is almost true*—and that he "emerged a confirmed Marxist." Carl Degler puts the conversion seven years later, affirming that "by the time" Du Bois wrote *Black Reconstruction* "he had become a Marxist." On the other hand, Rembert W. Patrick writes that Du Bois was "not a Marxian" when writing that book; while Howard K. Beale suggested that "perhaps it would be fairer to Marx to call Du Bois a quasi-Marxist."¹⁷ Having found Du Bois described as a confirmed Marxist, a plain Marxist, a quasi-Marxist, and not a Marxist we have perhaps exhausted the possibilities.

Du Bois was a Du Boisite. His political affiliations or affinities varied as times changed, as programs altered, and as he changed: in his twenties, no doubt a reform Republican (like Douglass); prior to World War I, a Socialist; in 1912, however, urging Wilson's election; in the postwar period, often voting, at least in national elections, for Thomas; in the early Thirties, a leader, along with John Dewey, Paul Douglas, and others, in a movement for an Independent politics; after World War II, favoring the (Henry) Wallace movement and Progres-

*Actually, Du Bois first visited the U.S.S.R. in 1926.

sive party efforts; in the 1950's, running for the U.S. Senate on the American Labor party ticket (and getting a quarter of a million votes); and, at the nadir of the political fortunes of the Communist Party, with its illegality apparently affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court, choosing that moment to announce his decision to join that party.

These were, however, political choices and not defining marks of his philosophical approaches. All his life Du Bois was a radical democrat, even with his "Talented Tenth" concept which held that mass advance depended upon leadership and service from a trained minority and insisted that such a goal and such service were the duty of that minority and if not accepted and performed spelled the vitiation of the minority itself.¹⁸

Du Bois' political biography and his views of history surely do not add up to the term Marxist in any meaningful sense. Du Bois certainly was significantly influenced by Marx and Marxism, which is to say—as C. Wright Mills did say under somewhat analogous circumstances¹⁹—that Du Bois was an educated man. This influence came in concentrated form only toward the last third of his life. For this lateness Du Bois was severely self-critical, as he was for a neglect of Freud.²⁰ He concluded that no other system of thought was as revealing as Marxism, but to the end of his days he remained an idealist, philosophically speaking, in key areas of his thinking. While he found Marx rather late in his life, he seriously concerned himself with Lenin's views even later. As late as October 1934, he remarked in a letter:²¹ "I have a fair library of Marx, but only one or two of Lenin's works." Had this neglect not existed it is difficult to see how Du Bois could have persisted in using the term "dictatorship of the proletariat"—even in the very limited way in which he did use that term—as pertains to the Radical Reconstruction governments.

He did affirm views on capitalism as a system and

colonialism as a phenomenon that were strikingly similar to, though not fully identical with, those of Marx and Lenin. But his attitude toward the working class, the state, Communist parties, mass initiative, and the entire materialist outlook were not those of Marx or of Lenin, though again marked similarities appear. If one insists on shorthand perhaps the careful Howard Beale came closest with his term "quasi-Marxist." Given, however, Du Bois' own genius and the monumental scope of his interests, his output and the dynamic quality of his thinking, I would myself prefer the term of Du Boisite; what this lacks in imagination and illumination it makes up for in—accuracy!

Du Bois, personally shy and remarkably objective about himself, never suffered from self-effacement or excessive humility. At a very early age he was persuaded—as were his neighbors and associates, Black and white—that his powers were considerable. Of all his books, he knew the first was the most scholarly in the conventional sense (he even saw this as one of its limitations).²² He once told this writer his favorite volume was his biography of John Brown, based altogether upon rather easily accessible secondary works. But in the area of historiography, he knew, as he said in a letter written²³ while in the throes of creating it, that his "magnum opus" was *Black Reconstruction*. That book, he said, in applying for funds to assist in its final revision, "will not sell widely," but "in the long run, it can never be ignored."²⁴ Du Bois was right on both counts.

Black Reconstruction deserves a book in its own right: how it came to be written, its sources, the people participating in its creation, how it was funded, its revisions, its contents, its critical and popular reception, its impact upon Black and white opinion, upon the scientific com-

munity, upon the making of history and the making of history books and texts.

For purposes of brevity we choose as a theme the remarks of one among the many more recent commentators on Reconstruction. Professor Staughton Lynd²⁵ pays generous tribute to Du Bois' pioneering in denying that enfranchising Blacks after the Civil War was a "great mistake"; and in showing that the Reconstruction governments had been slandered by the profession generally. Lynd says that "liberal historians of the last generation who have sought to correct the traditional image of cigar-smoking Negro legislators voting themselves gold spittoons have added very little," since Du Bois' paper of 1909.

Lynd writes that the main problem now and for the future should be "what strategy of planned social change might have succeeded?" He thinks that the futility of legal and military force "to coerce deep-seated attitudes" is plain; that those who hold that such efforts stopped too soon offer little real help; that a third alternative is sounder, namely: "The fundamental error in Reconstruction policy was that it did not give the freedman land of his own. . . . Congress should have given the ex-slaves the economic independence to resist political intimidation."

It is unclear to this writer that alternative number three should be distinguished from alternative one and/or two. Giving land to the freedmen surely would have required legal action and in all likelihood rather considerable military action. To see that such a transformation in the socioeconomic nature of the South was actually maintained as well as begun would have surely required alertness lest both legal and military measures be terminated too soon.

Professor Lynd goes on to point out that Du Bois in his

1901 article on the Freedmen's Bureau saw the consequence of this kind of land policy. I want to add that this is one of the central themes of his *Black Reconstruction*, in which it is developed and documented with infinitely greater care and depth than in the 1901 essay. Lynd's failure to make this clear is noted because in the estimates of *Black Reconstruction* this significant feature of its content is normally omitted.²⁶

Many other areas of Reconstruction, beginning to receive treatment only in our own day, are in *Black Reconstruction*.

The point made by Professor C. Vann Woodward—that the political rights of the Southern Black population were quite tenuous, dependent upon the political and economic motivations of Republican leaders for extending those rights, with the possibility (and, as it happened, the reality) of the motivations changing and so the attitude toward those rights changing—also is in Du Bois' book.²⁷

The relationship between the possibilities of exploitation of the resources and labor of the South by a rising industrial capitalism, and the impact this was bound to have upon Reconstruction politics, also is in his work. So is the suggestion that much of the alleged corruption in Reconstruction governments originated in one or another mode of enriching the masters of that rising industrial capitalism—a central theme in Horace Mann Bond's penetrating study.²⁸

Du Bois' book is weak insofar as it tends to ignore the former non-slaveholding whites who were landed—*i.e.*, the yeomanry—and who therefore had class as well as racist differences with the Black millions. It is weak, too, insofar as it accepts the concept of a monolithic white South from the pre-Civil War period to Reconstruction. But it pioneered in a related area, for it forcefully called

attention to the neglect, then, of the history of poorer whites in the South.²⁹

The momentous impact upon the nature of U.S. society and therefore upon world history of the failure of democratizing the South—which is what the defeat of Reconstruction meant, in Du Bois' view—is emphasized in *Black Reconstruction*. The consequent turn toward an imperial career, to which Woodrow Wilson pointed with delight, was a development which Du Bois denounced and concerning which he warned in prescient terms.³⁰

Du Bois also sought to make clear that Reconstruction was an episode in the entire—and worldwide—struggle of the rich versus the poor. He emphasized not only the specifics of the land question in the South but the whole matter of property rights; indeed, he called one of the most pregnant chapters in his volume "Counter-Revolution of Property." He saw, as had Madison a century before him, that the right to and control of property was central to problems of the state and therefore of all forms of state, including that of democracy. Du Bois, like Madison, emphasized the special connection between democracy and property insofar as the principle of universal enfranchisement meant political power in the hands of the majority and that the majority normally had been and was the nonpropertied.

In this sense Du Bois saw the story of Reconstruction, especially as it concerned the millions of dispossessed Blacks, as an essential feature of the story of labor; not labor in the sense of industrial and/or urban working people, but in the more generic sense of those who had to work to make ends meet. I think Du Bois' use of the term *proletariat* was more classical than Marxian; *i.e.*, the proletariat, the lower classes, as the dictionary says, and from the Latin *proletarius*, a citizen of the lowest class. (In this connection, let it be recalled that Du Bois began

his teaching career as professor of Greek and Latin and throughout his life he would lapse into Latin phrases at frequent intervals.)

Du Bois states in *Black Reconstruction* (p. 381n.) that he originally entitled Chapter 10 "The Dictatorship of the Black Proletariat in South Carolina," but had changed it to "The Black Proletariat in South Carolina" because "it has been brought to my attention that" the former would be incorrect. Obviously, since he made the change, he agreed with the criticism (which came from Abram L. Harris and Benjamin Stolberg and probably others). But here is the reason which he gave for the original title.³¹

My reason for this title is that in South Carolina, beginning in 1867, there were distinct evidences of a determination on the part of the black laborers to tax property and administer the state primarily for the benefit of labor. This was not only a conscious ideal but it would lead to heavy taxing on land, to the buying of large tracts of land to be distributed among the poor, and to many direct intelligent statements of the object of these policies.

In the same letter, Du Bois remarked that this manifested petty-bourgeois influences "both among white and colored, and in a strict Marxian sense, the state and country was not ready for that dictatorship of the proletariat which might have come in a later development and on (*sic*) other surroundings."

When this meaning that Du Bois had in mind and his purpose are comprehended, then perhaps one will be less apt than both contemporary and later commentators have been to simply dismiss all this out of hand. Certainly, in the Marxian sense, Radical Reconstruction represented an effort to bring a bourgeois-democratic order to the South. In this effort, given the formerly slave-based

plantation economy, the idea of "land to the landless" was fundamental; this meant not the elimination of the private ownership of the means of production—a basic aim of the dictatorship of the proletariat—but rather its wider distribution. From this point of view Du Bois' choice of words and expressions was confusing and erroneous. But his perception of the relationship of particularly exploited Black masses to any effort at making democracy real and to any secure advance of the deprived of all colors—which is what he was bringing forward—was profound and remains challenging, not only in terms of history writing but also in terms of history-making.

It is relevant that Du Bois' original title for his book was *Black Reconstruction of Democracy in America*. At the urging of the publisher the title was shortened. Nevertheless, with the shortened title, Du Bois insisted the title page carry this subtitle: "An Essay toward a History of the Part which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880."

While spelling out the full subtitle, notice is to be taken of the dates Du Bois offered; his book starts with the Civil War. This represented not only Du Bois' insistence upon the decisive role Blacks played in preserving the Union and emancipating themselves—quite new ideas in the 1930s, and still unreported in most U.S. history texts—but also his conception of the unity of the whole struggle against slavery, of the war and of the Reconstruction effort. This has been urged by some later commentators (as Howard K. Beale)³² who failed to note Du Bois' attempt at it decades ago. In *Black Reconstruction*, Du Bois denied that with its defeat, struggle and activity on the part of the Black people ceased for a generation; on the contrary, he pointed out that it

continued and even had some successes in the late 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s.³³ This theme, too, has only recently been "discovered."

It will be well at this point to allow Du Bois himself to state the basic theme of *Black Reconstruction*; presumably he is a good authority for this. He stated this, in differing ways, several times; we shall, for reasons of space, quote only one and that extremely brief:³⁴

To me, these propositions, extreme as they may sound, seem clear and true:

1. The American Negro not only was the cause of the Civil War but a prime factor in enabling the North to win it.
2. The Negro was the only effective tool which could be used for the immediate restoration of the federal union after the war.
3. The enfranchisement of the freedmen after the war was one of the greatest steps toward democracy taken in the nineteenth century.
4. The attempts to retrace that step, disfranchising the Negro and reducing him to caste conditions, are the deeds which make the South today the nation's social problem Number One.

Du Bois added that involved in the reality of Reconstruction was "the question of the equal humanity of black, brown, yellow and white people" He flung this question, in his prophetic way tossing out a generation ago today's most urgent problem: "Is this a world where its people in mutual helpfulness and mutual respect can live and work; or will it be a world in the future as in the past, where white Europe and white America must rule 'niggers'?"

Certain critical comments on Du Bois as an historian have been offered, perhaps the most cogent by himself, as we have indicated. There remain certain other failings, really of a minor nature.

In the enormous body of Du Bois' writings, errors of fact will be found; almost always these are of a minor—even picayunish—nature. I think their occurrence is probably somewhat less uncommon than among historians of analogous scope. It is worth adding that reviewers often made a point of calling attention to these failings or slips. These range from apparent slips in proofreading, as dating a governor's message of 1875 as 1865; to confusing David Walker with his son Edwin; or occasionally misspelling the name of Henry Highland Garnet; or consistently misspelling the name of Martin R. Delany; or confusing General William T. Sherman with General Thomas W. Sherman and placing him in Port Royal, South Carolina, in October 1861 rather than in November; or spelling the name of the leader of the Boer Rebellion in 1914 as Martiz, rather than Maritz. In only one book, however—and that the only one Du Bois ever wrote "to order," as it were—is the carelessness really excessive, but Du Bois himself confessed that this had been "too hurriedly done, with several unpardonable errors."³⁵ Let those in a stern mood look up these errors; the others are so inconsequential I shall not waste footnotes upon them.

Somewhat more serious was a literary tendency on Du Bois' part which took the form of rather exaggerated assertions or a kind of symbolism that in the interest of effect might sacrifice precision. Professor Wesley in his already cited review in *Opportunity* (1935) gave several examples of this tendency; he called it "a tendency to dismiss the explanations of some events with all too brief a wave of the hand." Exaggerations for effect would lead Du Bois to ascribe the Seminole Wars *purely* to the problem of fugitive slaves, or U.S. acquisition of the Louisiana Territory *solely* to the rebellion of Haitian slaves. A kind of poetic license would lead Du Bois to place John Brown's hopes as centering on the Blue Ridge

Mountains, which was probably true; but he would add that it was in those same mountains "where Nat Turner had fought and died, [and] where Gabriel had sought refuge," which is simply not true. This objection probably reflects the weaknesses of a pedestrian plodder before the canvases of an inspired poet-historian.

With such nit-picking I am reminded of Du Bois' "Forethought" to his immortal *Souls of Black Folk*; "I pray you, then, receive my little book in all charity, studying my words for me, forgiving mistake and foible for sake of the faith and passion that is in me, and seeking the grain of truth hidden there."

His grains accumulated to a vast monument and precious heritage. It was Du Bois who began the scientific study of Afro-American history, who saw that it constituted a test of the American experience and dream, that it was a basic constituent in the fabric of United States history, that it was part of the vaster pattern of the colored peoples who make up most of mankind.

Even in detail it was Du Bois who pioneered the study of the slave trade, who first offered new insights into the Freedmen's Bureau, who first pointed to the significance of the Black people in the Abolitionist movement, who contested the stereotype of the docile and contented slave, who helped illuminate the meaning of John Brown, who transformed approaches to the Civil War and Reconstruction, who pioneered in writing the history of African peoples, whose studies of Southern agriculture and of Northern cities—in particular, Philadelphia—remain massive and pioneering efforts in historiography.

In view of all this we must respectfully dissent from Professor George B. Tindall's conclusion: "He [Du Bois] became himself a historical figure whose writings constitute an important source for historians of the Negro, but his own career as historian was somewhat limited."³⁶

Only in the sense that Du Bois was more historymaker than historian may one properly speak of his performance in the latter as "somewhat limited." For any person not of Du Bois' monumental stature his achievements in history writing would make of him an outstanding practitioner of that art in the record of American historiography.

One must note that of all major publications only the *American Historical Review* failed to review Du Bois' *Black Reconstruction*. This may have been due to some accident unknown to the present writer but it strikes me as unforgivable, though with the state of American historiography in 1935 the absence of a review in that journal may well have been a service to its author.³⁷

More bothersome is the one-sentence notice of Dr. Du Bois' passing that the *Review* managed to spare in its issue of January 1964 (LXIX, 602). In the same issue the death of Charles Seymour received fifteen times as much space, Ralph Flanders' four times more, and Ernst Kantorowicz' five times as much. I begrudge nothing to these other estimable mortals but I am mortified by the judgment behind such allocations of space.

Perhaps this session, in his Centennial Year, represents the association's way of publicly acknowledging error—to use no harsher word. If this is so and if this also reflects a real concern to study the life and work of W. E. Burghardt Du Bois then—if for no other reason—the 1968 meeting of the AHA will be memorable.

"This paper, in abridged form, was read at the 1968 meeting of the American Historical Association. The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of his wife, whose help always has been important but in the preparation of this paper was indispensable. I wish to acknowledge also the kindness of Professor Otto H. Olsen for having read this paper and offering helpful suggestions."

Afro-American Superiority: A Neglected Theme in the Literature

Social, political, economic, and physical resistance to the condition of special oppression permeates the history of the Afro-American people. Intellectual resistance at the same time permeates the written record created by this people. Indeed, that record in all its forms—petitions, poems, songs, folk tales, formal histories, stories, novels, plays, autobiographies, writings in periodicals—in largest part is made up of the rejection of and arguments against concepts of racism and specifically against the idea of the innate inferiority of African-derived peoples.

There have been moments of doubt. "At times," wrote Du Bois, in his "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," these "seemed about to make them ashamed of themselves"; moments, indeed, of despair, again articulated by Du Bois, as in his "Of the Training of Black Men": "Suppose, after all, the World is right and we are less than men?" But these were momentary; from Walker to Douglass to Du Bois, from McKay to Cullen to Hughes to Childress to Baldwin to Cleaver the opposite note has dominated—a note absolutely rejecting as a lie with transparent purposes the notion of racism in general and Black inferiority in particular.

Dominant analysis and commentary have emphasized the contrary. From Bruno Bettelheim to Harvey Cox one reads of "self-fulfilling prophecies" where, to quote Cox,

when a people "are given no other identity images than those served up to them by the white majority [they] tend to enact the expectation, which in turn reinforces the prejudice."¹ This assumes, of course, that Black people have been incapable of providing their own image of themselves, an assumption which reflects an ignorance that can only be called staggering.

One finds now from Senator Eastland to Stanley Elkins agreement as to the essential reality of Sambo; explanations differ but the end result is—Sambo's reality. One finds now not simply a Mayor of Los Angeles and other distinguished American statesmen describing the Black as animal-like; no, now that the crucial testing time has come, one finds so liberal a writer as Harriet Van Horne in so liberal a paper as the *New York Post* (January 20, 1969) writing an article entitled "A Liberal Dilemma" and concluding that the trouble really is that "America did dehumanize the Negro" and so now this dehumanized one "is turning, he is rending and we shall have to bear it." Poor things, how they suffer!

Along with this deluge concerning Sambo and dehumanization, go lamentations about self-hatred and a "crippled" folk who are "culturally-deprived," etc., etc.

As stated, the inner doubts do occur—and it would be miraculous if they did not—but the central fact is that the literature as a whole damns as a falsehood concepts of inferiority. This—which shouts from the evidence—is neglected in the texts and the "conventional wisdom." Furthermore, a consistent theme in the literature not only rejects the concept of Black inferiority but also projects the idea of Black superiority, meaning this, generally, in terms of ethical or moral superiority, but carrying over also in terms of standards of beauty, aesthetic sense, and modes and values of life. The idea does ring, frequently,

with a kind of national pride or consciousness but it is not racial; *i.e.*, it does not affirm and at times does explicitly deny, anything smacking of the biological or genetic and so, in that sense, too, is the negation of racism.

At times something approaching an awareness of this affirmative quality in the literature of the Afro-American people appears in the comments of white writers. When it does, however, it is put in tentative terms and it is affirmed as something quite new and rather startling. For example, V. F. Calverton, in his introduction to the 1929 Modern Library edition of *Anthology of American Negro Literature*, wrote (p. 13):

The admission of inferiority which was implicit in so much of the earlier verse, the supplicatory note which ran like a lugubrious echo through so many of its stanzas, has been supplanted by an attitude of superiority and independence on the part of Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes and Gwendolyn Bennett.

It would be interesting to discover some of the "admissions of inferiority" and the evidence of supplication in the earlier verse; Mr. Calverton supplied none. Perhaps it would be Phillis Wheatley whose 1784 poem entitled "Liberty and Peace" opens: "Lo! freedom comes." Perhaps it would be George Moses Horton who, in 1829 writing "On Liberty and Slavery," opened: "Alas! and am I born to this,/ To wear this slavish chain?" Or perhaps it is James M. Whitfield who, in his poem entitled "America," published in 1853, opened with these lines: "America, it is to thee,/ Thou boasted land of liberty,/ It is to thee I raise my song,/ Thou land of blood, and crime, and wrong." Or perhaps it is Frances E. W. Harper whose poem "Bury Me In a Free Land," published in 1854, commences: "Make me a grave where'er you will,/ In a lowly plain, or a lofty hill;/ Make it among

earth's humblest graves,/ But not in a land where men are slaves." In all these one clearly has enough "admission of inferiority" and "the supplicatory note" to satisfy anyone!

Again, Harvey Swados, in a book published in 1966, announces that:²

It is already apparent that we are going to witness a substantial movement of new Negroes, liberated from ignorance, self-underestimation and self-depreciation, into the fields of poetry, drama and fiction.

Here Mr. Swados has not only forgotten—assuming he ever knew—the people forgotten by Calverton in 1929; he has neglected the people that Calverton did have the good sense to observe in the 1920s—that is, Cullen, Hughes, and Bennett, not to mention then and thereafter Fauset, Toomer, Fisher, McKay, Sterling Brown, James Weldon Johnson, Chester Himes, Arna Bontemps, William Attaway, Frank Horne, Margaret Walker, Theodore Ward, and John Killens, let alone Richard Wright and W. E. B. Du Bois!

The dominant note in historical writing, too, when dealing with the Afro-American people, is to emphasize ideas of self-depreciation and to convey the notion that self-pride is something altogether new. The former appears, for example, in much of the writing of Eugene Genovese and is central to William Styron's nightmare published as *The Confessions of Nat Turner*—and since some professional historians including Mr. Genovese have spoken highly of the authenticity of the latter monstrosity one is uncertain in just what genre it belongs. As to the note of discovering something new, an example is Edmund Cronon's useful biography of Marcus Garvey. We are told there:³

The racial doctrines of Marcus Garvey were infusing in Negroes everywhere a strong sense of pride in being black. For

the first time in the long bitter centuries since their ancestors had left Africa in chains, masses of Negroes in the United States and elsewhere in the New World were glorying in their color.

It is as dangerous for a historian to write "for the first time" as it is for him to write "never." In this case, for example, one wonders what Mr. Cronon would do with Du Bois' poem, published a generation before Marcus Garvey touched the United States:

I am the Smoke King.

I am black,

I am darkening with song

I am hearkening to wrong:

I will be black as blackness can,

The blacker the mantle the mightier the man.

Du Bois' classic—or rather one of his classics—was called, of course, *The Souls of Black Folk*, and that appeared back in 1903. Its whole point was to express "a strong sense of pride in being black"; indeed, its very title had a note of irony in it for it appeared when divines who were white were publishing books with titles like: *The Mystery Solved: The Negro a Beast*—and here a Black man was writing one long prose poem exalting the souls of these animals!

What is the point of Simmons' *Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive and Rising*, except to express this "sense of pride" and to strive to further it? And that book came from a Black minister who was then president of the State University in Louisville, Kentucky; it was published back in 1887. Here, for example, is the preface of the Rev. Dr. Simmons' book: "I wish the book to show to the world—to our oppressors and even to our friends—that the Negro race is still alive, and must possess more intellectual vigor than any other section of the human family."

One should add that Carter G. Woodson's preface to the fourth edition of his *The Negro in Our History*, published forty years after Simmons' book, does not claim for the Black more intellectual vigor than the white but it certainly affirms that he has no less than any other peoples and that whites have suffered from a serious "handicap." Thus one reads:

In the proportion as Americans and Europeans become removed from such nonsense as the Nordic myth and race superiority, they will increase their interest in the history of other peoples who have accomplished just as much good as they have. So long handicapped by this heresy, however, they still lack the sense of humor to see the joke in thinking that one race has been divinely appointed to do all the great things on this earth and to enjoy most of its blessings.

Any examination of the short stories and novels produced by Afro-Americans will show that a fundamental theme is the moral superiority of the Black as compared with the white. This is the heart, for example, of one of the earliest short stories from a Black person's pen—Frederick Douglass' "The Heroic Slave," first published in 1853 and dealing with the uprising of slaves in 1841 aboard the domestic slave trader *Creole* led by Madison Washington—the "heroic slave" of the title. Thereafter the examples are endless; thus one has Du Bois' short story entitled "Of the Coming of John," which forms Chapter 13 of his *Souls of Black Folk*. There are two Johns depicted, one white and the other Black; no reader can for a moment doubt which of the two is ethically the inferior and the superior. By the way, in Walter White's novel, *Fire in the Flint*, published a generation later, the chapter where the hero, Bob Harper, avenges the rape of his sister and then is lynched is essentially the same story and with the same point. White, in fact, hammers home the point of superiority and inferiority by showing the

white mob tearing apart the hero's body for souvenirs, and then: "The show ended. The crowd dispersed. Home to breakfast."

Indeed, this note of moral superiority begins with the beginnings of Afro-American prose; it infuses, for example, David Walker's *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*, which shook the slaveholders to their boots when it appeared in 1829. Further, even before the Civil War, one finds also a quite explicit affirmation of the superiority of the Black as compared with the white in aesthetic or physical terms. A notable example is afforded by Dr. John S. Rock of Massachusetts—a remarkable and singularly neglected figure. Dr. Rock was an important Abolitionist, a physician, and the first Afro-American attorney admitted to the bar of the U.S. Supreme Court. Here are a few lines from a speech he delivered in Boston in 1858:⁴

When I contrast the fine, tough muscular system, the beautiful, rich color, the full broad features, and the gracefully frizzled hair of the Negro, with the delicate physical organization, wan color, sharp features and long hair of the Caucasian, I am inclined to believe that when the white man was created, nature was pretty well exhausted—but, determined to keep up appearances, she pinched up his features, and did the best she could under the circumstances.

One may well compare this with the marvelously witty and ironic essay that Du Bois published in Mencken's magazine *The Smart Set* in April 1923, entitled "The Superior Race"; it is written in the form of a kind of Socratic dialogue between Du Bois and his "white friend." The "white friend" is, understandably, somewhat startled to find Du Bois saying that "in faces I hate straight features; needles and razors may be sharp—but beautiful, never." While Du Bois consoles his friend that all such matters are simply "personal opinions" and

"matters of taste" he inexorably goes on to express his own tastes. He chooses, he says, "intricately curly hair, black eyes, full and luscious features, and that air of humility and wonder that streams from moonlight." Du Bois continues pitilessly: "Add to this, voices that caress instead of rasp, glances that appeal rather than repel, and a sinuous liteness of movement to replace Anglo-Saxon stalking—there you have my ideal."

When one speaks of the white world and its reality, Du Bois goes on, one must ask:

Is this superiority? It is madness.⁵ We are the supermen who sit idly by and laugh and look at civilization. We, who frankly want the bodies of our mates and conjure no blush to our bronze cheeks when we own it. We, who exalt the Lynched above the Lyncher and the Worker above the Owner and the Crucified above Imperial Rome.

Du Bois ends by telling "his friend" "Can you not see that I am laughing at you?" Do you not understand that the world of human beings is not "simply a great layer cake with superimposed slices of inferior and superior races, interlaid with mud?"

But he adds, and here he is deadly serious:

All that I have really been trying to say is that a certain group that I know and to which I belong, as contrasted with the group you know and to which you belong, and in which you fanatically and glorifyingly believe, bears in its bosom just now the spiritual hope of this land because of the persons who compose it and not by divine command.

It is worth observing that Du Bois' novel *Dark Princess*, published by Harcourt, Brace in 1928, is in essence a fictionalized version of this 1923 essay. Added in that book is Du Bois' growing belief in the potency of the oppressed as such; he has the hero, Matthew Towns, say, in a conversation with Asians and Africans: "We come

out of the depths—the blood and mud of battle. And from just such depths, I take it, came most of the worthwhile things in this world.” This suggests another dimension to the whole discussion of “superiority” and “inferiority”—namely the Christian-Marxian concept of the “saving grace” or the “liberating potential” of the oppressed, exploited, and despised of this world. Within the limits of this chapter one can only call attention to the relationship; another essay—or, better, a book—would be needed (and merited) to trace out its full implications.

Connected are the concepts of “The Intellectual Pre-Eminence of Jews” (to use the words of Veblen’s essay, published in 1919) and of *The Natural Superiority of Women* (using the title to Ashley Montagu’s work, issued in 1953). Both based their concepts on the salutary effects—upon character and/or intellect—of oppression and, especially, resistance thereto. Just a few months ago, Sir C. P. Snow offered the opinion that the apparent intellectual superiority of Jews might well be explained genetically rather than in Veblen’s terms. Far be it from me to display any excessive modesty, but I must say I would have greater confidence in Lord Snow’s stimulating views had they not been offered in a speech before the Hebrew Union College and Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City!⁶

Related is the insistence that also runs through the literature of Afro-American people upon the corrosive and debilitating impact that the existence of oppression exercises upon the brains and souls of oppressors.⁷ Again, only a few examples can be offered because of space consideration. Here is Kelly Miller, a distinguished educator and leader during the early part of the twentieth century. In his *Open Letter to Thomas Dixon, Jr.*—Dixon being, of course, the notorious racist and glorifier of the KKK; it is upon his novel, *The Clansman*, that the film *Birth of a Nation* was based—Miller wrote in 1905:

Those who become inoculated with the virus of race hatred are more unfortunate than the victims of it. . . . Race hatred is the most malignant poison that can afflict the mind. It freezes up the fount of inspiration and chills the higher faculties of the soul.

In somewhat excessive and overgeneralized form, this certainly is one of the main points of LeRoi Jones, for instance, and of the present-day Black Muslims, for another example.

The poets of the so-called Harlem Renaissance period in the 1920s often conveyed a sense of Black superiority.

Thus Countee Cullen:

*My love is dark as yours is fair
Yet lovelier I hold her
Than listless maids with pallid hair,
And blood that's thin and colder*

Langston Hughes, in the same period:

*We should have a land of trees
Bowed down with chattering parrots
Brilliant as the day
And not this land where birds are grey*

And Gwendolyn Bennett, also in the 1920s:

*I love you for your brownness
And the rounded darkness of your breast;
I love you for the breaking sadness in your voice
And shadows where your way-ward eye-lids rest.*

The obverse—i.e., comment upon the debilitating effect of being on top in an exploitative relationship—appears in the literature of the same period. Who can forget, for instance, the four-line epitaph that Countee Cullen penned, “For A Lady I Know”?

*She even thinks that up in heaven
Her class lies late and snores
While poor black cherubs rise at seven
To do celestial chores.*

And in the novels from Black writers of the 1920s, in addition to Du Bois, the same note is pervasive. Once more a single example. This is Claude McKay's *Banjo*, published by Harper in 1929; a main character, a Black man named Goosey, is talking (p. 182):

You don't know why the white man put all his dirty jokes on to the race. It's because the white man is dirty in his heart and got to have dirt. But he covers it up in his race to show himself superior and put it on to us.

Might not one, reading this and not knowing its source, think that was LeRoi Jones—for instance—writing in the 1960s and not McKay forty years earlier? Or James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* (Dial Press, 1963), for example (p. 97; italics in original):

It is so simple a fact and one that is so hard, apparently to grasp; *Whoever debases others is debasing himself*. That is not a mystical statement but a most realistic one, which is proved by the eyes of an Alabama sheriff—and I would not like to see Negroes ever arrive at so wretched a condition.

In a way the whole thesis is in one of those remarkable paragraphs that Langston Hughes managed to utter through Simple's mouth:⁸

I just want to know how come Adam and Eve was white. If they had started out black, this world might not be in the fix it is today. Eve might not of paid that serpent no attention. I never did know a Negro yet that liked a snake.

Read or reread James Weldon Johnson, Pauli Murray, Alain Locke, Alice Childress, Arna Bontemps, Margaret

Walker, Melvin Tolson, John O. Killens, and see if one does not find quite the opposite of Harvey Swados' "Self-underestimation and self-depreciation." No, this literary Sambo is quite as fictional as the historical Sambo; both are constructs of racism and neither in fact represents the reality of the history or of the literature of the Afro-American people.

We may close with the great speech of Martin Luther King, Jr., when in December 1955, in Birmingham, he called upon the Black community to express their determination to resist and to resist and to resist again—with the results the world knows.⁹

When the history books are written in future generations, the historians will have to pause and say, "There lived a great people—a black people—who injected new meaning and dignity into the veins of civilization." This is our challenge and our overwhelming responsibility.

For us who work in history—whatever our color—this stands large among *our* challenges and our responsibilities.

⁸Delivered in part at the 2nd Annual Meeting, American Studies Association, Toledo, Ohio, November 1, 1969.

Styron-Turner and Nat Turner: Myth and Reality

History's potency is mighty: the oppressed need it for identity and inspiration; oppressors for justification, rationalization, and legitimacy. Nothing illustrates this more clearly than the history writing on the Afro-American people.

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth—with U.S. monopoly capitalism aborning and feeding especially on the ravishment of the South, with the last of Populism being crushed and the memories of Reconstruction and its betrayal still fresh—there appeared at frequent intervals the outpouring of the Dunning-Fleming school, based at Columbia University. Stout volume after stout volume was published, with the accoutrements of the highest scholarship, treating in general and then state by state the post-Civil War generation; their assumptions were the inferiority of the Black and the sanctity of private property and their conclusions justified the KKK and glorified the Bourbon.

These tomes having prepared the ground, popularization came through fiction and film—notably Dixon's *The Clansman* (1905), read by scores of thousands, and its film version, *Birth of a Nation* (1915), seen by tens of millions. The point here was the bestiality of the black, almost literally (indeed, in 1900, in St. Louis a Christian divine produced a volume whose theme was the nonhumanity of the Negro, as shown in its title, *The Mystery Solved—The Negro a Beast*).

With the turning into the first decade and beyond of the new century—after Du Bois' *Souls of Black Folk* (1903), the founding of the Niagara Movement (1905), and the NAACP (1909–1910), Booker T. Washington's death (1915), and World War I, plus U.S. entry therein (1917), and the employment of hundreds of thousands of Black troops in France—while the Dunning-Fleming-Dixon image of barbaric brutality was not expunged, along with it and increasingly to the fore came the no less mythical concept of utter passivity, docility, and imitateness. This also was based explicitly upon the idea of the immutable and biological inferiority of the Afro-American.

The masterwork in this school was U. B. Phillips' *American Negro Slavery* (1918), reinforced by the essentially similar effort from the same man, *Life and Labor in the Old South* (1929). Here emerged—again with full scholarly accoutrements—the picture of the plantation South as marvelously placid, wonderfully attractive, and resting upon the labor of a people—Black people, who were the world's most natural slaves, who simply delighted in chains—so serene that no one really noticed chains, let alone heard them rattle.

Phillips' work did not sell many copies but few authors have been more influential. All Americans who went to school from about 1920 to about 1940 were presented essentially the Phillipsian version of slaves. Protest came only from the Left and from Black scholars themselves, especially Du Bois, Charles Wesley, and Carter G. Woodson. The latter was the guiding spirit from its founding (1915) of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, which through its *Journal*, other publications, and yearly meetings combatted the chauvinist stereotypes. But the white world, including the organized historical profession, deliberately ignored or was quite oblivious to all this.

The most successful popularization of the Phillipsian mythology was Mitchell's *Gone With The Wind*, issued at the close of the rebellious 1930s and in 1939 put out in motion picture form with the greatest publicity campaign ever undertaken up to that time. The novel and the film were read and seen by hundreds of millions; the film itself was reissued in its original version five times, and again with tremendous fanfare in a remade 70-mm. version in October 1967. In professional circles an effort at the rehabilitation of Phillips has been undertaken with his 1918 volume reissued in 1966, in paperback by Louisiana State University Press, with a laudatory introduction by Eugene D. Genovese. The same scholar delivered a very positive estimate of Phillips' work in a session devoted entirely to him at the December 1966 meeting of the American Historical Association.

The substance of the Phillipsian view, though not his biologically based racism, fits well into the latest rationalization for patterns of segregation and discrimination. In the 1940s this took the form of the massive volumes by Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, whose analysis put the problem in the "hearts and minds of the white people" and so made it into a "dilemma," i.e., an insoluble problem. Significant, too, in this regard was the slight volume with the ambitious title, *The Negro in the Americas*, by Frank Tannenbaum. The latter work was remarkable for its cavalier disregard of mere facts which sustained the conclusion that slavery in the United States was especially dehumanizing and had in fact succeeded in making its victims into the image cast by their masters.*

*Note the role of the so-called Agrarians in the 1920s and 1930s in idealizing the Old South. William Faulkner actually suggested that the return of slavery would be of distinct benefit to Black people (*New York Herald Tribune*, Nov 14, 1931).

The 1950s and 1960s have witnessed the growth of a literature, notably that produced by Hannah Arendt and Bruno Bettelheim, insisting that the oppressors—in this case, Nazis—succeed in making their victims over into the image which rationalized the efforts at victimization in the first place. These writers, as Tannenbaum, do not permit facts and data to stand in the way of their generalizations.

Reinforced by psychological works reaching similar conclusions, like *The Mark of Oppression* by Lionel Ovesey and Abram Kardiner, there has appeared in history writing the effort associated with the names of Tannenbaum, Stanley Elkins, and Genovese to affirm that the Phillipsian version of Afro-American slavery was substantially accurate, though its presentation was "marred" by the author's racism. We now are being told that the enslavement itself, particularly the form prevalent in the United States, was such as to produce "Sambo" in fact. The image offered is of one who is savage and docile at the same time, who is emotionally and psychologically sick, filled with self-hate, permanently injured by family deprivation, who grovels and smashes, who writhes and twists, to whom sadism is purification, who is preoccupied with sex in its most putrid and/or perverse forms; above all, one who is eaten up alive with self-abuse and self-contempt. The source is a psychosocial environmentalism, rather than the now rather thoroughly discredited defective gene theory. But the identical result is "Sambo." In terms of the struggle against jim crow, it is necessary to remark that the ruling class wants "Sambo" (which is why it created the myth in the first place) and will welcome him quite regardless of how he came into being.

The fictional image of the Dunning school was *The Clansman*; the fictional image of the Phillips school was

Gone With The Wind; the fictional image of the Elkins school is William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (New York, 1967).

Few novels have had more advance to-do made about them than *The Confessions*; interviews with the author have appeared in magazines and newspapers throughout the country, including the *New York Times*. *Harper's Magazine* for September 1967 used fifty-two pages to publish a considerable section of the novel prior to its release. The Book-of-the-Month Club announced as its November choice that year this million-dollar property. Ghetto uprisings crackle throughout the nation. What could be more appropriate and functional than a novel ostensibly based on the life of the slave whose very name symbolizes rebellion; especially if the novel, as Clifton Fadiman correctly says,* shows us the "strange, mad mind of Nat Turner," offers "a passkey to the dark dungeon of his sexual imagination," demonstrates that "the overwhelming majority of the slave population refused to follow him," makes clear that "the rebellion itself would have been pathetic had it not been so stupid and brutal," and that its only result "was to be expected: greater repression of the Negroes." Yes, indeed, with these values and estimates and generalizations the novel does "throw some light," as Mr. Fadiman does not fail to point out, "on the bleak dilemmas of our own anguished era"; at any rate the kind of "light" that Club and Mr. Fadiman have been laboring so sacrificially so many years to throw on this "dilemma."

Certainly, Mr. Styron's book would seem to be elucidating Turner's mind and imagination—mad and sick, as Fadiman says—since it is written as though Turner is narrating. Mr. Fadiman thinks Styron has managed complete identification or empathy; this, he tells us, is the

*In the *Book Club News* announcing the November choice.

novelist's "central achievement." Whatever this book is, it is certainly not Turner as the available evidence presents him, and it is certainly not the slave society of nineteenth-century Virginia, where Turner lived and whose foundations he shook.

Shall we excuse this on the grounds that it is, "after all, a novel"? I think not, because there *were* authenticated *Confessions* by Turner, upon which Styron explicitly founds his book and from which he quotes some portions, not always accurately. Further, the book is prefaced with an Author's Note in which the reader is told, "During the narrative that follows I have rarely departed from the *known* facts about Nat Turner and the revolt of which he was a leader" (*italics in original*); the *Harper's* extract carries an editor's foreword wherein one reads, "Styron has adhered to the known facts of the revolt wherever possible." On the contrary . . .

One of the very well established facts concerning the slave Nat Turner is that he fled from his owner in the mid-1820s, stayed away about a month, and then, moved by religious qualms, returned to the service of his earthly master. We know, too, that upon his return he was berated for this by many of his fellow slaves. They said he was a fool to have come back and, as Turner said, "they murmured against me." No hint of this central experience is in the novel. Especially important in the original *Confessions** is the evidence of the antislavery feelings of his peers; this is not in the novel.

One of the most dramatic moments in the actual *Confessions*—for that matter, in American history—comes when Turner's court-appointed investigator demands to know whether or not he sees now—in jail and

*Made in a Virginia prison to a court-appointed interrogator after Turner's capture. The full text, including all appendices, is in my *Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion* (New York, 1966).

in chains, soon to be executed—that he was mistaken in what he had undertaken. The interrogator himself reports Turner's reply: "Was not Christ crucified?" This direct, simple, and great flash is not in the novel.

When Styron does quote from the *Confessions* he is accurate, with two exceptions, together quite revelatory. He has Turner saying that "my mother strengthened me" in a belief in his special capacities. The actual *Confessions* has Turner saying, "my father and mother"; the two italicized words are omitted. A little further along, Styron quotes Turner as saying that "my mother" and others offered the opinion that with his marked "sense" he would develop into a difficult slave; in the *Confessions* at this point one finds "my grandmother." At still another point, Mr. Styron has Turner say, "I never laid eyes on my grandmother"; Turner, however, not only "laid eyes" on her but remembered her rather well and specifically says that he "was much attached" to her.

In fact, while American slavery certainly dealt awful blows to the family structure of the slaves, it never fully destroyed it—in large part because of the women's ingenuity and resistance. A rather unusual and well documented feature of Turner's life is that he remembered both his father and his mother and a grandmother, too. The father, also a slave, fled and made good his escape (this is in the novel) but not before having left a clear mark on the memory and the consciousness of his son. This may conflict with elements of the Kardiner-Ovesey view and the Moynihan thesis, but that is the fault of the view and the thesis, not of Nat Turner!

In the *Confessions*, Turner mentions that his father and mother taught him how to read (a perilous and illegal undertaking). Turner adds that this was accomplished so early in his life that he could not remember when it occurred; he polished up his literary prowess at odd moments, especially from the books of white children.

But the novel indicates that Turner is educated by his master, who in his benevolence wishes to experimentally demonstrate that Blacks can learn to read and write.

The novel is filled with details as to Turner's sexual drives, dreams, desires, and so on. These are shown as deeply inhibited, tending toward the homosexual and simultaneously obsessed with physical desires toward white women. These are the sheerest and most stereotyped kinds of inventions by Mr. Styron. Contemporary evidence shows clearly that Turner had a wife—not contractually, since this was not allowed for slaves, but actually—and that they had at least two children. Such evidence further shows that the wife was lashed severely prior to Turner's capture in a (vain) effort to get her to disclose his whereabouts.

There is repeated reference in the novel to the Great Dismal Swamp, lying in the southern part of Southampton County—locale of the revolt—and extending into North Carolina. Styron has Turner reject this as a possible refuge for the discontented slaves, insisting that to reach it and to survive therein were not possible. The historical fact is that the swamp *was* the refuge for generations of fugitive slaves, many of whom not only made it but survived in it, carved out a community life therein, resisted capture, and used it as a base from which to launch punitive expeditions against plantations. Indeed, many contemporaries thought, when the Turner uprising became known, that it was in fact another such assault.

The Turner rebellion cannot be understood unless it is seen as the culminating blow of a particular period of rising slave unrest. Such periods were never absent in the South for long. They appeared and reappeared in waves and the Turner cataclysm was the highlight of one such wave which commenced about 1827 and played itself out in 1832. In the *Confessions* the interrogator specifically

asked Turner whether his outbreak was part of other such efforts just past and others perhaps impending. Turner said no but added, in a perfectly straightforward way, that since he had been moved to rebel others similarly situated might also be similarly moved. This reality conflicts with the novel's insistent but false theme of the uniqueness of the Turner manifestation of slave unrest.

An important feature of this marked unrest just before the Turner outbreak was that it resulted in reinforcement of the already massive machinery of control—a machinery never mentioned in the novel but fundamental to an understanding of slave militancy and protest, especially the odds mounted against their manifestation. Not only were new repressive laws passed just *before* the outbreak, but additional police measures were taken at the specific requests of Southern governors, including the Governor of Virginia. Furthermore, this reached the highest levels of government; at the orders of the Secretary of War, federal forts were reinforced in the Spring of 1831 both in Louisiana and Virginia—and Turner and his men rose up in August.

None of this fits a pattern which weaves through the novel—explicitly stated by its author elsewhere—that the system of slavery “dehumanized the slave and divested him of honor, moral responsibility and manhood” and that “the character (not characterization) of ‘Sambo’ . . . did in fact exist.”* Certainly, in the novel the bulk of the slaves are made into “Sambos” and I am afraid this *is* characterization; that it is not character is demonstrated by the historical record of the Afro-American people in the United States both during and after slavery.

The novel is permeated with the most chauvinist stereotypes and descriptions of Black people; put in the

*Styron's words in his review of my “American Negro Slave Revolts,” *New York Review of Books*, Sept. 26, 1963.

mouth and mind of the slave rebel Nat Turner makes them no more palatable. We offer examples. The Blacks are: “God's mindless outcasts” (p. 27); “hopelessly docile” (p. 58); “addled, distraught, intimidated throng” (p. 99); “sloppy, uncomprehending smiles” (p. 103); “as stupid as a barn full of mules” (p. 104); “stupid and brutish inertia” (p. 202); “docile equanimity” (p. 223); “like animals” (p. 224); “ignorant, demoralized, cowed” (p. 276); “spiritless and spineless wretches” (p. 398). Styron attributes these thoughts to Turner, but absolutely nothing in the contemporary record substantiates any of it. Rather, whenever Turner speaks of his fellow slaves, he speaks with respect and in some cases affection.

The character of Will, which plays so vital a part in the novel, has no semblance to anything history shows of the Will who participated in the Turner uprising. While Styron makes him “that mad black man” (p. 9), finally engaging in a power play with Turner, in the actual *Confessions* one meets Will through Turner's mouth when, just before the launching of the attack, he found Will as a newcomer among the conspirators. Turner says only that he greeted Will and asked him how he came to be there and that Will replied that freedom was as valuable to him as to any man and that he meant to try for his. This, says Turner, was enough to put him in my confidence and Will joins the fray and loses his life. All this is to be contrasted with the lustful, sadistic, crazy figment that appears and reappears with filth in his mouth and blood on his hands through page after page of the novel.

The novel emphasizes in many ways that Turner was able to recruit only about seventy or seventy-five men, while the county held over seven thousand slaves of whom many hundreds might physically have been expected to join. But the records of history—unlike the novel—do not show efforts at recruitment, other than the

original handful of six. It is these six who commence the uprising, in one parish of the county, and in a day and a half of desperate struggle are joined by perhaps seventy more. All things considered—the system of control, the stakes involved, the apparent lack of prior preparation—this argues for discontent so deep that scores would actually risk their lives to express it.

Perhaps the single most gross distortion in this novel is its repeated and graphically described references to the arming of “loyal” slaves by the masters to resist the rebels. In the novel these armed slaves are most consequential in actually suppressing the rebellion. Toward the volume’s close, the court-appointed investigator taunts Turner with this “fact.” Turner is shown as pondering these taunts and agreeing with them; indeed, at one point (p. 400) Styron has Turner say, “Yes, Gray [the questioner] was right,” and it is Styron who italicizes these words. This, however, is made up out of whole cloth.

The nearest incident—and it is still very, very far from Styron’s descriptions—revolves around some slaves of a Dr. Simon Blunt who, according to a contemporary Virginia newspaper, were warned by their master to remain “loyal” and were given by Blunt some agricultural tools as “weapons” and placed by him on guard in his kitchen. In fact, however, there was only a small engagement with some of the rebels at the Blunt home; the rebels did not come to the house itself for they were met by gunfire—not pitchforks—coming from the windows and fired by Blunt and his sons. Not more than this in any case occurred and some of the details depend upon a letter written by Robert E. Lee (yes, the same Lee!) to his mother-in-law describing what he had been told by an officer participating in the suppression of the rebellion.

To depict, as Styron does, an organized arming of

slaves by masters and then a decisive battle between these slaves and the rebels is not only utterly false to the specific event but also reflects an absolute misapprehension of the nature of slavery in the United States.

One of the themes of the novel is the uniqueness of the event it describes. *Harper's Magazine* refers to the Turner uprising as “the single effective revolt in American history.” Styron’s prefatory note refers to the Turner event as “the only effective, sustained revolt.” In the novel one reads that never before had “these people . . . risen up” (p. 387), a thought repeated further on (p. 410). Quite apart from repeated plots, some of them involving thousands, that were nipped in the bud, there were many actual uprisings, arms in hand, from Virginia in 1691 to Mississippi in 1864—all this apart from uprisings in coffles, aboard domestic slave-trading vessels, the massive participation of runaway slaves in the Seminole Wars, and the persistent phenomenon of maroons everywhere in the slave region.

The novel spares no details in describing actual killings, and insurrections are not pretty. Insurrections by Black slaves, however, are no more ugly than those by other oppressed people. The specific remark attributed to Turner in the novel, that he felt a “divine mission to kill all the white people in Southampton, and as far beyond as destiny might take me” (p. 258) again is Styron and not Turner. On this we do have the words of Turner as quoted not by Gray in the *Confessions* but by the editor of the *Enquirer*, Richmond’s leading newspaper of that period (November 8, 1831): “Indiscriminate slaughter was not their intention after they obtained a foothold, and was resorted to in the first instance to strike terror and alarm. Women and children would afterwards be spared, and men too who ceased to resist.” Pertinent, too, is the fact that the Governor of Virginia, in a letter to the Governor of South Carolina (dated November 19, 1831),

stated that the Turner rebels had spared a family of poor whites who were, said the governor, "in all respects upon a par with them."

What is the reality of Turner? We here summarize the known facts. He was a slave, as were hundreds of thousands with him; he was more gifted than most and had a more complete family life for a longer time than most. He was religiously inclined, as were all his contemporaries; he had his early doubts as to what to think of the institution of slavery but like his father before him came to actively detest it. In this he was encouraged by his family and fellow slaves. He was born and matured in a Tidewater county of Virginia, with about as many slaves as white people and with a relatively high number of free Blacks. It was a county where Quakers had been numerous but by the time Turner had reached manhood they had left slave territory.

As he comes out of adolescence, depression befalls the South and becomes intense in the Tidewater counties and especially in Southampton. Unrest intensifies and the slavery question induces growing excitement—in Virginia, in the nation, and internationally—for example, the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829–1830, the appearance of David Walker's pamphlet (1829), the beginnings (1830) of the National Negro Convention movement, the launching of *The Liberator* (January, 1831), the intensification of the British Anti-Slavery movement, and the news of repeated slave outbreaks in the West Indies.

Slave repression machinery is intensified, there is a mounting breakup of slave families, and the increased sale of slaves to the far South from eastern Virginia. Despite this, the depression induces so large a movement of whites from the seaboard regions of the South that the proportion of Blacks to whites grows.

In the midst of this, the idea of armed rebellion takes

hold of Turner, is passed on to a handful of comrades who quickly agree. When actually launched, the rebellion gains recruits quickly and results, despite very poor arms, in massive casualties inflicted upon the slaveowners and their families.

This outbreak was another in the endless roster of blows by the insulted, oppressed, and exploited for freedom and dignity. It affirmed yet again the sacred spark of protest. It helped shatter the indifference of most in the nation. It assisted in precipitating the era of crisis not to be resolved until a desperate slaveholding oligarchy turned to armed counterrevolution and was forcibly suppressed by a nation that finally understood its own salvation required emancipation.

Every fact we have—every piece of evidence, whether from Turner or his jailers or the white contemporaries who edited newspapers or governed states or managed plantations—shows clearly that Turner the slave rose in rebellion against slavery. Turner hated slavery and desired its termination. Turner took seriously the words of the Bible: the first shall be the last and the last shall be first; God created all nations of one blood; God so hated slaveowners that he sent plagues upon their first-born sons; he so loved slaves that he parted the seas to permit them to escape; and he so loved justice and hated oppression that he gave his own Son up to the Cross as a symbol of that love and that hatred.

So long as resistance is preferred to submission and liberty to slavery, so long as Mankind can thrill to exclamations—Give me liberty or give me death! Rather die on your feet than live on your knees!—just so long will Mankind, unless blinded by racism, hail the short, black, thirty-one-year-old slave named Nat who denied guilt to the faces of his executioners, went to the gallows calmly, and achieved immortality.

That Nat Turner did exist and was real; he shook the

earth in his brief span on it and the sons and daughters of the people who produced Cato and Gabriel and Denmark and Nat again shake the earth with the demand for freedom.

Styron, in his already mentioned review of my *American Negro Slave Revolts*, argues that presenting "the slave in revolt" rather than what the plantation system "must have" done to them—*i.e.*, made them "docile," "childish," "irresponsible," and "incapable of real resistance"—is but another element in the "white man's ever-accommodating fantasy." I do not wish to go again into the historical data, and it is there that the answer lies, of course.

But I do wish to take up the notion that Styron here expresses—and others have also—that the rejection of the Phillipsian mythology and the projection of the views associated with the present writer is the result of "white man's fantasy." Such a position reflects as much sheer ignorance as it does chauvinism. I say this because while it is true that there were white men and women who denied the concepts of docility, of "Sambo"—including, in the pre-Civil War era, John Brown, and in the twentieth century some of the Left, such as Robert Minor and Elizabeth Lawson, Bella Gross and James S. Allen, and others like Frederic Bancroft and Kenneth W. Porter—the original work in this area was done by Black people.

This goes back before the Civil War to people like David Walker, Henry Highland Garnet, Frederick Douglass, and William C. Nell. Above all, it becomes clear in the present century. Here appears on the top of any list W. E. B. Du Bois, who by 1909 was challenging the Dunning school and had published his *John Brown*; Carter G. Woodson, who by 1915 had founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and who attacked the Phillips work on slavery as soon as it appeared. It

includes, in alphabetical order—and to give only examples (dates indicating time of appearance of relevant works)—Bontemps (1936); Brawley (1921); Sterling Brown (1930); J. C. Carroll (1939); Hollie E. Carter (1936); John W. Cromwell (1914); Asa H. Gordon (1928); L. J. Greene (1941); L. P. Jackson (1930); J. H. Johnston (1931); L. D. Reddick (1937); W. S. Savage (1938); L. D. Turner (1929); G. W. Williams (1883). There is hardly an issue of *The Journal of Negro History* from 1915 on which did not contain rejection of the "Sambo" myth and insistence upon and data to establish the fact of resistance.

I am confident that the rejection of "Sambo" is accurate. I am confident that the picture of the slave in the United States, characterized by discontent and marked frequently by militancy and significantly by outright rebellion, is accurate. But I am certain that the rejection of the first and the projection of the second came originally, most consistently, and most significantly from the minds of Black scholars down through the years.

Part
TWO

American Imperialism and White Chauvinism

The United Press reported on December 20, 1949, that Senator John J. Sparkman, an Alabama Democrat, "clashed with Dr. Dorothy B. Ferebee, president of the National Council of Negro Women, over whether civil rights legislation would improve the economic lot of Negroes."

The honorable Democrat was of the opinion that the enactment of a fair employment practices law might "actually do a lot of harm" and that the area of civil rights was more amenable to moral suasion than to legislation. There are many people very much more well meaning than the Senator from Alabama, who are confused by this type of argument.

The argument and the confusion are of long standing. In 1896, in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, a Negro's challenge of jim crow legislation was rejected on an argument identical with that advanced by Senator Sparkman. The Negro challenged, on the basis of the Fourteenth Amendment, the constitutionality of a Louisiana law providing for segregation aboard trains. The Supreme Court rejected his plea, asserting that civil rights could not be legislated but required, rather, a long process of education.*

*Ten years later William Graham Sumner placed the Court's "law" into a "law" of social science in his vastly influential *Folkways*.

There is an interesting inconsistency in the reasoning of the Supreme Court and of Senator Sparkman. This inconsistency may be brought out in the form of a question: If laws are ineffectual against jim crow, why are laws needed for jim crow?

Jim crow is manmade; ruling-class-made, to be exact. It rests upon ruling class law; it is imbedded within the governmental apparatus. The ruling class does and will fight to retain racism, since it is one of its most potent weapons for maintaining imperialism.

Indeed, American imperialism and white chauvinism are blood relations. American imperialism breeds and needs white chauvinism.

Our purpose in this chapter is to sketch briefly the historical evidence of this integral connection. We have said that jim crow rests upon ruling class law. It does, and fairly recent law, at that. Laws providing for discrimination and segregation and for disfranchisement make their modern appearance from the late 1880s to the early 1900s.

Mississippi's jim crow statutes stem from an enactment of 1888, while those of North Carolina stem from the enactment of 1899. Disfranchisement, a more complicated process, was accomplished—after fierce opposition from many whites as well as Blacks—by new constitutions adopted as follows: Mississippi, 1890; South Carolina, 1895; Louisiana, 1898; North Carolina, 1901; Alabama, 1901; Virginia, 1902; Georgia, 1908; Oklahoma, 1910.

One may observe immediately that these laws and constitutional enactments appear with the burgeoning of American monopoly capitalism, with the appearance of American imperialism. This relationship is not simply one of time; it is one of cause and effect.

Much has been written about the development of monopoly capitalism in the post-Civil War generation.

There is a mountain of literature on the Rockefellers, Hills, Harrimans, Carnegies, Armours, Havemeyers, and Morgans who make their debuts during this era, crush competition, perfect their monopolies, and start—especially with the Spanish-American War, 1898–1899—their careers as international tycoons.

But just as for hundreds of years the enslavement of millions of Black workers is neglected in historical literature as a key explanation for the speed and magnitude of the development of American capitalism, so the conquest of the South and the repression of the Afro-American people is neglected in the literature on the rise of American imperialism. The fact of the matter is that when American monopoly capitalism turned its attention seriously to overseas investments and to the appropriation of Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines, it simultaneously turned its attention seriously to investments in the South and to the establishment of terrorist domination of the Southern masses and especially of Black people. As the former activity produced the most rabid type of jingoism, the latter, basing itself on the racism derived from slavery, produced the most virulent form of white chauvinism. As the former resulted in the imposition, by law, of second-class citizenship upon the people of the new colonies, the latter had the same result for the masses of the so-called New South, especially for the Negro people.

Contemporaries, especially among Negro leaders like Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois and William Monroe Trotter, pointed out the connection between American aggression overseas and the mounting terror against Afro-Americans. Others observed this, too. Senator George F. Hoar of Massachusetts, one of the very few Republican leaders to oppose imperialism, pointed out that the ideological justification for the subjugation of the people of Cuba, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines was

identical with that hitherto offered by Bourbon Democrats on the Negro question. Moorfield Storey, distinguished Boston attorney and later the first president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, was a leader in the anti-imperialist movement. In 1905, while reasserting his conviction "that our Philippine policy is wrong," Storey added, "I feel that it is also responsible for the reaction at home against the Negroes."

At the same period the Bourbon Senator Tillman of South Carolina remarked: "Republican leaders do not longer dare to call into question the justice or the necessity of limiting Negro suffrage in the South." And again, on the floor of the Senate: "I want to call your attention to the remarkable change that has come over the spirit of the dream of the Republicans. Your slogans of the past—brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God—have gone glimmering down the ages. The brotherhood of man exists no longer."

It is pertinent that the treaty annexing the Philippines would certainly have failed of ratification by the Senate had there not existed a coalition on this question between the Republicans and the Bourbon Democrats.

By the late 1880s there was in full swing in the South what its people called "The Great Barbecue," the invasion of their land by Northern capital. In 1880 the South produced four-hundred thousand tons of pig iron; by 1890 this was quadrupled. In the same decade the quantity of timber taken from Southern forests more than doubled and there ensued an enormous expansion in the furniture industry. From 1880 to 1900 the number of textile mills in the South increased three and a half times, the number of spindles over seven times, and by 1915 there were more cotton textile mills in the South than in the rest of the country. Bituminous coal production in the South leaped from six million tons in 1880 to fifty-two

million tons in 1900. Other industries, such as tobacco and railroads, grew correspondingly.

Consolidation came with growth, a fact which may be indicated by mentioning the appearance in the 1890s of such giant corporations as the American Tobacco Company and the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company. While much of the early capital for this expansion was local, as the movement continued a greater and greater proportion came from great Northern monopolies. By 1900, while half a billion dollars were invested abroad, one billion dollars had been invested in Southern manufacturing. By 1900 J. P. Morgan and Company controlled the Baltimore & Ohio, the Southern and the Central of Georgia, and by 1907 the recently formed United States Steel Corporation (also dominated by Morgan) had absorbed the tremendous properties of the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad trust centered in the Birmingham-Chattanooga area.

Monopoly capitalism has fastened itself nowhere and upon no people without a struggle. This is as true of the Southern people in general and the Black people in particular as of any other people in the world. It is widely assumed that with the crushing of Reconstruction late in the 1870s the Negro people lost all political effectiveness and simply lay down, not to get up again, until perhaps the Niagara Movement of the first decade of the twentieth century. This is nonsense. The 1880s and 1890s were years of fierce struggles, of some notable though temporary successes, of the most brutal and violent suppression, comparable to that practiced upon the Filipino peoples by the same imperialism during the same general period.

During the post-Reconstruction period from 1877 to 1901 eleven Blacks were elected to Congress. They were: from Mississippi, Blanche K. Bruce and John R. Lynch; from South Carolina, Richard H. Cain, James H. Rainey,

Robert Smalls, Thomas E. Miller, and George W. Murray; from North Carolina, James E. O'Hara, Henry P. Cheatham, and George H. White; from Virginia, John M. Langston.

Blacks sat in all Southern legislatures throughout the 1880s and 1890s. The facts for Mississippi are typical: the legislature of that state in 1878 contained seven Negroes; in 1880, eight; in 1882, eleven; in 1884, ten; in 1886, seven; in 1888, seven; in 1890, six; and even that of 1899 still had one Black member. Dozens of Southern cities had Negroes appointed and elected officers on all levels of administrative responsibilities; cities like Danville, Virginia, Jackson, Mississippi, and Wilmington, North Carolina, had anti-Bourbon administrations, uniting Blacks and whites in the 1880s and 1890s. Indeed, only terrible massacres in 1883 and 1893, engineered by the employers, overthrew the governments in those three cities.

The great Populist third party antimonopoly movement of the 1890s captured several Southern state governments and seriously challenged the rule of the oligarchy throughout the South. On the executive committees of this People's Party everywhere in the South, when it was vigorous in the early 1890s, were Blacks together with whites; officials elected on this ticket in the South were Negroes as well as whites; and over a million Afro-Americans (including three hundred thousand women) were members of the Colored Farmers' Alliance, one of the main mass bases of that Populist movement.

To conquer this South and smash the rising unity of Black and white, to resubject the Negro people to special oppression, American imperialism turned to the weapons of fraud, terror, and white chauvinism. When these three instruments succeeded in smashing opposition, imperialism saw to it that the laws codifying and sustaining

white chauvinism, to which reference has already been made, were passed.

The brutality of this imperialism was complete everywhere. H. O. Havemeyer, of the Sugar Trust, told the Federal Industrial Commission in 1899: "I do not care two cents for your ethics. I don't know enough of them to apply them. . . . As a business proposition, it is right to get all out of a business that you possibly can."

A leading Republican newspaper, the *San Francisco Argonaut*, said in January 1899:

The Anglo-Saxon methods of warfare do not appeal to the Malay [*i.e.*, the Filipino]. In pursuance of our imperialistic plans, it would be well to hire some of the insurgent lieutenants to betray Aguinaldo and other chieftains into our clutches. A little bribery, a little treachery and a little ambuscading, and we could trap Aguinaldo and his chieftains. Then, instead of putting them to death in the ordinary way, it might be well to torture them. The Spaniards have left behind them some means to that end in the dungeons in Manila. The rack, the thumbscrew, the trial by fire, the trial by molten lead, boiling insurgents alive, crushing their bones in ingenious mechanisms of torture—these are some of the methods that would impress the Malay mind. It would show them that we are in earnest. . . . This may seem to some of the more sentimental of our readers like grim jesting. It is not. It is grim earnest.

In June 1894 *The Nation* reported the Right Reverend Hugh Miller Thompson, bishop of Mississippi, as justifying lynching because "the laws are slow and the jails are full." In November 1898, Col. A. M. Waddell said in North Carolina, according to the *Raleigh News and Observer*, that "we are resolved" to win the elections in Wilmington, "if we have to choke the current Cape Fear with carcasses. The time for smooth words has gone by, the extremist limit of forbearance has been reached." Five days later the colonel led an armed force against the

Black-white administration of Wilmington, slaughtered scores, and announced himself the new mayor, and the federal government gave silent assent.

In 1900 the *San Francisco Argonaut* said: "We do not want the Filipinos. We want the Philippines. The islands are enormously rich, but, unfortunately, they are infested by Filipinos. There are many millions there, and it is to be feared their extinction will be slow." That same year Tillman of South Carolina announced on the floor of the Senate: "We took the government away. We stuffed the ballot boxes. We shot Negroes! We are not ashamed of it."

And the respectable Republican papers of the North—the organs of monopoly capitalism which had usurped the South and for which the Tillmans worked—nodded approval. In 1898 the *Philadelphia Record* said: "We have evidently just begun the task of Americanizing the African." The *Providence (R.I.) Journal* editorialized that same year that perhaps the Negro "could be made a more orderly citizen if there were restored something like the old interest taken by the masters and mistresses in the Negro boys and girls around them."

The "Negro boys and girls" were made "orderly citizens" and "Americanized" in the inimitable manner of American imperialism. From 1889 through 1901 there were 1,955 recorded* lynchings or an average of 165 lynchings per year for twelve years. That is, in these dozen years of the rise of American imperialism occurred

42 percent of all recorded lynchings from 1882 through 1947.

To back up the fraud, terror, and laws went the evolving of a modern "scientific" white chauvinism. The writings of Herbert Spencer in sociology, Madison Grant in anthropology, William A. Dunning in history, William McDougall and the whole paraphernalia and corruption of so-called intelligence tests in psychology, the distortions of Darwinism, all bolstered this chauvinism.

For an idea of what this meant, note the work of an anatomist, R. B. Bean of Johns Hopkins University. In 1906 Bean published in the very widely circulated magazine *Century* a study of "The Negro Brain." Here are his conclusions, and they were broadcast by the general press: "The Caucasian and the Negro are fundamentally opposite extremes in evolution. . . . It is useless to try to elevate the Negro by education or otherwise, except in the direction of his natural endowments. . . . Let them win their reward by diligent service." When three years later Franklin P. Mall, professor of anatomy at Johns Hopkins and founder of the *American Journal of Anatomy*, proved Bean's work to be fraudulent and his conclusions nonsensical, his (Mall's) report appeared only in the *American Journal of Anatomy*. It did not reach the audience which had been exposed to Bean's vicious lies.

The organized labor movement showed the effect of rising chauvinism. The AFL, which had had a rather good record on the question in the later Eighties and the early Nineties, began to adapt itself more and more to jim crow by the end of the century. By 1910 its craft base and general opportunism were nowhere reflected more tellingly than in its crass white supremacist practices.

We conclude, then, that modern white chauvinism is organically connected, from its origin, with American imperialism. Imperialism refurbished the racism of slav-

*The count comes from Tuskegee Institute and undoubtedly is a minimum. The Mississippi white historian Vernon L. Wharton, writing of the post-Civil War generation, states: "It is impossible to make any estimate of the number of individual Negroes lynched or murdered by whites during the period. Such matters attracted little or no attention in the press." Similarly, the Louisiana white historian, William I. Hair, notes that in his state the Tuskegee records seriously under-counted. See his *Bourbonism and Agrarianism* (Baton Rouge, 1970), pp. 187-88.

ery and used this white chauvinism to help it succeed in the conquest of the South and the subjugation of the Black people. This chauvinism is integrally related to the jingoism of imperialism which appeared most virulently at the same time. In the United States the historical evidence* demonstrates that American imperialism, basing itself upon the white supremacy of slavery, developed and nurtured white chauvinism as its ideological reflection and bulwark.

*This essay was first published in July 1950 (in *Jewish Life*). Two later books by C. Vann Woodward add considerable data: *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge, 1951) and *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (N.Y., 1955). Also relevant is Rayford W. Logan's *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877-1901* (N.Y., 1954).

Consciousness of Afro-American Nationality to 1900

In 1947 Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois made explicit an awareness of Black nationality in an official publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People which he edited. The publication constituted an appeal for justice made by the association to the United Nations, and in it the elder statesman of the Afro-American people wrote: "The United Nations surely will not forget that the population of this group [the Black people] makes it one of the considerable nations of the world." Dr. Du Bois went on to compare the total number of Afro-Americans with the population totals of Egypt, Canada, Belgium, Hungary, and so on, and concluded: "In sheer number then we are a group which has a right to be heard; and while we rejoice that other smaller nations can stand and make their wants known in the United Nations, we maintain equally that our voice should not be suppressed or ignored."¹

American Communists rightly pointed to these words as tending to support their position that the Afro-American question is a national one, and as marking a high point in national consciousness among Afro-Americans. It is generally assumed that such an awareness is a distinctly modern phenomenon going back no further than the distorted reflections it received in the post-World War I Garvey movement. This assumption is false.

Was there a complete absence of any articulate expression of national consciousness until the post-World War I era? The fact is that there were many such expressions of awareness, sometimes reaching the stage of verbal enunciation, sometimes of attempts at formal analysis. However faulty this analysis may have been, the germ of a feeling, of a consciousness of nationality, was clearly present.

The simply verbal expression of the concept goes back to prerevolutionary America when the African influence was very strong, as is shown by Phillis Wheatley's remark in 1772 on learning that many Blacks were embracing Christianity: "It gives me very great pleasure to hear of so many of my nation seeking with eagerness the way of true felicity."² This type of usage appears frequently thereafter and indeed recurs throughout the nineteenth century. The address of the "First Annual Convention of the People of Color" (1831), in referring to Black youth, stated: "Yes, it is with us to say whether they shall assume a rank and standing among the nations of the earth, as men and freemen, or whether they shall still be prized and held at market price."³ The address of the second annual convention, in calling for higher education for Blacks, said this would reflect "brilliance on our national character which will elevate us from our present situation."⁴ The declaration of the Negro National Convention of 1853, signed by Frederick Douglass and several other outstanding Black leaders, in referring to the progress made by their people against overwhelming odds, stated: "It is believed that no other nation on the globe could have made more progress in the midst of such an universal and stringent disparagement."⁵ A final example—and others are available—occurring in 1899 comes from Du Bois. Writing on the subject, "The Negro and Crime," Du Bois quite explicitly referred to the Black people as "such a nation."⁶

Booker T. Washington himself, in a speech of 1896, referred to the Black people in the South as constituting "a nation within a nation."

More developed expressions of this idea go back to the beginnings of the nineteenth century. Thus, an anonymous member of the African Society in Boston, in an address delivered and published by that society in 1808, said: "Men have exercised authority over our nation as if we were their property, by depriving us of our freedom as though they had a command from heaven thus to do. But, we ask, if freedom is the right of one nation; why not the right of all the nations of the earth?" So highly did the American people value freedom, continued the orator, that they felt it right to wrest this prize by arms from Great Britain. "If desirable, I say, to America under such circumstances, why not to any or all the nations of the earth?"⁷

A passionate sense of nationality pervades the entire body of David Walker's famous *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, published in 1829, though a clear formulation of the idea does not appear. Earlier, however, in a speech before the General Colored Association in Boston (1828), Walker appealed for the forging of the closest unity among Black people so that they might take their rightful place "among the nations of the earth."⁸

At several pre-Civil War gatherings of the Negro people, inklings of a feeling of nationality were expressed. Thus the first resolution adopted by a gathering of Philadelphia Blacks in 1830 declared: "That we do most cordially rejoice that the bond of brotherhood, which rivets a nation together in one indissoluble chain, has collected so large a portion of our people together."⁹ The call for a state convention of the Negro people of Michigan issued in 1843 began by urging united, militant action in the struggle for "human liberty and equal rights." Such action was needed, said this call, written by

five outstanding leaders of the state: "For as we are an oppressed people wishing to be free, we must evidently follow the examples of the oppressed nations that have preceded us: for history informs us that the liberties of an oppressed people are obtained only in proportion to their own exertions in their own cause. Therefore, in accordance with this truth, let us come up, and, like the oppressed people of England, Ireland and Scotland, band ourselves together and wage unceasing war against the high-handed wrongs of the hideous monster Tyranny."¹⁰

At a state convention of Ohio Blacks in 1849, a heated debate was precipitated by a resolution which condemned colonization in all forms. The point of the debate was not that any Negro at the convention failed to see in the American Colonization Society a chauvinistic tool of the white ruling class, but rather that some of the delegates felt that the resolution, as proposed, precluded the concept of Black nationality. Thus George R. Williams, of Ross County, insisted that "the resolution ought to be discussed with great care, as it affected not only this State, but every State in the Union. He said that he did not want to look up to the white man for anything. We must have nationality. I am for going anywhere, so we can be an independent people." J. Mercer Langston, later a Congressman from Virginia, agreed with Mr. Williams (he altered his opinion thereafter) and thought, "We must have a nationality, before we can become anybody."

The convention, consisting of forty-one delegates from twelve counties, adopted a majority report of great significance following this debate. Here the convention points out that colonization anywhere represents flight in the face of the fact of the enslavement of millions of fellow Blacks and that Afro-American liberation was the overriding objective to be achieved through struggle. To-

gether with this went a rather clear awareness of nationality. Here are the words of the resolution:

Whereas, the question of colonization in the United States, is being greatly agitated, and whereas, certain colored men, together with whites, in the United States, have taken a position relatively to the matter which we deem incorrect, detrimental and destructive to our interest; and whereas, we deem it expedient for us to define our position on this point, determined at any hazard whatever, never to submit to any scheme of colonization, in any part of the world, in or out of the United States, while a vestige of slavery lasts; therefore,

Resolved, That in the event of universal emancipation, taking our freed brother as our coadjutor and helper in the work, prompted by the spirit of the fathers of '76, and following the light of liberty yet flickering in our minds, we are willing, it being optional, to draw out from the American government, and form a separate independent one, enacting our own laws and regulations, trusting for success only in the God of Liberty and the Controller of human destiny.¹¹

Other statements by Blacks of this period express this awareness of nationality though frequently placed in terms of expatriation, closely parallel in this respect to the Garvey movement. In 1851 a free Black in Alabama, arguing for the development of Liberia, wrote, "Let national pride be kindled . . . and go to and make us a great nation of our own, build our own cities and towns, make our own laws, collect our own revenues, command our own vessels, army and navy, elect our own governors."¹²

The writings of Martin R. Delany, certainly one of the outstanding pre-Civil War Black leaders and during the war a major in the Union Army, expressed the idea of nationality quite vigorously, although here again it was associated with leaving the limits of the United States.

Delany repeatedly used expressions such as: "We have native hearts and virtues, just as other nations. . . . We are a nation within a nation—as the Poles in Russia, the Hungarians in Austria; the Welsh, Irish and Scotch in the British Dominion."¹³

The published *Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention of Colored People*, held in Cleveland in 1854 and attended by 102 delegates from eleven states (including Tennessee, Kentucky, and Louisiana) and Canada, are filled with similar remarks.

During these same years, Henry Highland Garnet, a leading militant Abolitionist with influence second only to that of Frederick Douglass, "steadily advanced," as his biographer, the Black physician and Abolitionist, Dr. James McCune Smith, has written, "taking newer and, as he believed, broader grounds for our people in whose behalf he claimed perfect equality in all things, until, by what seemed to him a logical necessity, he proclaimed the doctrine of 'negro nationality'."¹⁴

Other Black leaders of the same period, as William J. Watkins and H. Ford Douglass, agreed with this position of Garnet.

In the post-Civil War generation the concept of Black nationality reappears frequently, particularly during the period of the Populist movement, accompanied as that movement was by the fiercest type of armed terrorism of Bourbons acting largely as agents of a maturing American imperialism.

The upper-case spelling of the word Negro, which has become fairly general only during the past generation—as the result of continued pressure from Afro-American organizations—was insisted upon back in 1878 and was justified then, as later, on the grounds of nationality. The *Chicago Conservator*, a leading Black newspaper of the period, in an editorial entitled "Spell It With a Capital,"

the first printed discussion of the question this writer has seen, argued: "As a mark of disrespect, as a stigma, as a badge of inferiority, they [white publishers] tacitly agreed to spell his name without a capital. The French, German, Irish, Dutch, Japanese, and other nationalities are honored with a capital letter, but the poor sons of Ham must bear the burden of a small n."¹⁵

In 1890 serious discussion took place in Black publications and organizations as to the propriety of an independent or quasi-independent Black republic somewhere in the South, usually Texas or Oklahoma. A leader of such a movement in Texas was the Reverend J. H. Jones of Brazoria, whose Texas Farmers' Colonization Association attracted considerable attention. Its avowed aim was to carve out a state wherein Blacks might govern themselves and thus "rise as have other nations."¹⁶ At the same time there appeared a more widespread movement for making a Negro state of the Territory of Oklahoma, though this by no means was meant to exclude the presence of white and Indian peoples.

The leader in the Oklahoma movement, which persisted for several years, was Edwin P. McCabe. Typical of the response this movement evoked is an article published in 1890 entitled "Is The Negro Capable of Self-Government?" by the Reverend A. B. Gibson of Milledgeville, Georgia. The effort to establish a state "ruled and governed" by Blacks was considered by him "as good news." Should not they live under the administration of "Negro judges, lawyers, doctors, jurors, sheriffs, deputies, mayors, councilmen, legislators, governors . . . bankers, merchants, manufacturers?" It seemed self-evident to the minister that under these circumstances Black people would be in considerably better condition than "under the white man's government" in the South. The writer concluded his remarks, in this formative

period of the great Populist movement, by writing: "For my part, I am tired of both parties; the Negro's back is sleek where they have rode him so much."¹⁷

Shortly before this article appeared, a delegation of twenty Blacks "representing the Afro-American press" visited President Harrison, warned him of accumulating discontent among their people, and urged him to appoint an Afro-American as Secretary of the Oklahoma Territory then being formed.¹⁸

As late as 1892 the *New York Post* published the following story concerning this movement:

The movement to make Oklahoma a Negro State, which the white settlers were at first disposed to ridicule, is being managed with a great deal of skill. The man who is engineering it is Edwin P. McCabe, ex-State Auditor of Kansas, who asked the Republicans of that state for a second term of office only to be cast out of the party. The political disappointments, together with a great deal of ostracism at Topeka, determined McCabe. . . . He called to his side the most intelligent Negroes . . . began organizing "colonies" and executed the plan with so much energy that when Oklahoma was thrown open to settlement, 10,000 Negroes crossed the border to get a foothold in the new country. They came, of course, largely from southern states.

To help the cause, McCabe established a newspaper, *The Langston Herald*, in the interest of his race. This "organ" he distributed all through the South as well as Oklahoma. It boldly advocated the plan of dispossessing the whites of political power. The idea fascinated the southern Negroes, and they continued to make up colonies in spite of the planters who saw the labor in their fields dwindling in number. At the present writing, there are seven large colonies of Negroes in Oklahoma, and within the next sixty days, there will be upward of sixty colonies established if McCabe's plans do not miscarry. There are said to be 200,000 Negroes in the South organized for settlement in Oklahoma. A few years may see two Senators at Washington.¹⁹

It is this movement which was the wellspring for the several self-governing all-Black towns and communities, including Boley, Langston, Summit, Vernon, and others which exist in Oklahoma today.

The failure of such efforts as those of McCabe, the decline of the Populist movement, and the heightened ruthlessness of the American bourgeoisie and its Bourbon satraps as monopoly capitalism developed, resulted in the last years of the nineteenth century in renewed proposals for emigration. These always reflected a concept of nationality. Outstanding in this regard were the words of the Reverend Henry M. Turner, bishop of the AME Church and a former member of the Georgia state legislature. Mixed with Turner's insistence that (as he italicized), "*There is no manhood future in the United States for the Negro*," there went, nevertheless, an urgent demand for full and active participation in American politics on the part of the Black. His insistence upon the fact of Black nationality, which ran through everything he said and wrote, was distorted by himself into a plea for emigration.²⁰

The concept of Afro-American nationality, in one or another form, has been expressed by various sections of the Black population for almost two hundred years. Of no other people within the United States is this true, and this fact constitutes a very significant feature of Afro-American history.

«This essay was originally published in *Political Affairs*, June, 1949. Since then considerable work has been done on the history of Afro-American national consciousness; see, for example: the anthology edited by John H. Bracey, A. Meier and E. Rudwick, *Black Nationalism in America*, Robbs-Merrill, 1969»

The Washington-Du Bois Conference of 1904

On October 28, 1903, Mr. Booker T. Washington wrote from Tuskegee to Bishop Grant of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Indianapolis: "I very much hope that you will feel it to be your duty to throw aside all other engagements for the purpose of attending this meeting, which, I believe, is going to be the most important, serious and far-reaching in the history of our people."¹

One might expect that a conference thus characterized by Mr. Washington would find reference in available histories of the Afro-American or, certainly, in such a work as the biography of Washington by Basil Mathews, but this is not the case. A very brief note on the event occurs in Dr. Du Bois' 1940 autobiography; otherwise it seems to have gone unrecorded in secondary works. A partial explanation appears in the above-cited letter where the point is made that "the fact that there is to be such a meeting . . . [is to be] kept absolutely from the public for the present."²

This gathering constituted the climax of an effort of several years, emanating largely from the Tuskegee forces, to accomplish some sort of rapprochement between the Washington and anti-Washington forces in the ranks of Black leadership.

The Tuskegee policy of conciliation and acquiescence was never unanimously or wholeheartedly accepted by

the mass of the Afro-American community. This was true although most organs of communication, Negro as well as white, attempted to convey the opposite impression. By the end of the nineteenth century it became clear that the most eloquent, if not the most consistent, opposition voice belonged to the young scholar then working at Atlanta University, Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois.

Serious efforts at least to neutralize Du Bois seem to have begun in 1900. Early that year a vacancy appeared in the position of Superintendent of Negro Schools of the District of Columbia. The district commissioners turned, very naturally, to Mr. Washington for advice since he was the unofficial dispenser of governmental patronage for the Negro people. On March 11, 1900, Mr. Washington wrote Dr. Du Bois in a "strictly private" letter that he "had recommended you as strongly as I could." The appointment, however, was not made.³

The next year Du Bois, while attending a conference at Hampton Institute in Virginia, was approached by Walter Hines Page, editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* and of *World's Work* and co-founder of Doubleday & Page, publishers of Washington's autobiography in March 1901; William McVickar, Episcopal bishop of Rhode Island; and Dr. Frissell, the Institute's principal. These men asked whether he would be interested in editing a national magazine with headquarters at Hampton. When Du Bois was given to understand that the editorial line of this journal was to be determined by Tuskegee and not by himself, he declined the offer.⁴

In 1902 Dr. Du Bois received several invitations to leave Atlanta and teach at Tuskegee with a substantial increase in his salary. He was urged to undertake this change by some of the wealthiest backers of Mr. Washington's industrial training school, including the financier Jacob Schiff and the president of the Long Island Railroad, William H. Baldwin, Jr. The latter was a

member of Tuskegee's Committee on Investment of Endowment Fund, along with Messrs. J. G. Phelps Stokes, George Foster Peabody, and Robert C. Ogden, all of New York. During the same period Du Bois had at least two interviews with Mr. Washington himself and these were supplemented by correspondence. But the classical scholar, historian, and sociologist still "could get," as he himself wrote, "no clear understanding of just what I was going to do at Tuskegee if I went." He did not go.

Very early in 1903 this contact between Washington and Du Bois resulted in the former proposing a conference—closed to the public—in which leaders of various points of view were to attempt to reach some sort of agreement. Early in February, Mr. Washington sent out letters to about fifteen Afro-Americans "representing various sections of the country and various race interests, for the purpose of considering quietly all the weighty matters that now confront us as a race."⁵

The leaders, meanwhile, were formulating their strategies and readying their forces. Indicative is the following letter, marked "Confidential," which Dr. Du Bois sent to Professor Kelly Miller of Howard University.

Atlanta, Ga., February 25, 1903

Dear Miller:—I was asked to go to Tuskegee some time ago and at that time the Conference you have been invited [to] was cooked up. A little judicious pressure and insistence led to your invitation and that of [C. G.] Morgan of Cambridge [Mass.]. I do not now recall all the names but it includes [J. W.] Lyons, Bishop Grant, John [S.] Trower of Philadelphia, Rev. [C. T.] Walker of New York, [F. L.] McGhee of St. Paul, etc.

I think this will be a chance for a heart to heart talk with Mr. Washington

I propose to stand on the following platform:

1. Full political rights on the same terms as other Americans.
2. Higher education of selected Negro youth.

3. Industrial education for the masses.
4. Common school training for every Negro child.
5. A stoppage to the campaign of self-depreciation.
6. A careful study of the real conditions of the Negro.
7. A National Negro periodical.
8. A thorough and efficient federation of Negro societies and activities.
9. The raising of a defense fund.
10. A judicious fight in the courts for civil rights.

Finally the general watchword must be, not to put forth dependence on the help of the whites but to organize for self help, encouraging "manliness without defiance, conciliation without servility."

This program is hardly thought out—what is your opinion?

A month went by and no concrete results appeared. On March 20 Du Bois inquired of Washington as to the status of the affair. A week later the reply came that "the definite date for the meeting has not been fixed." The delay was explained on the basis of the difficulty involved in bringing together "a number of busy people," but the hope was expressed that the conference might be held by June.

Problems, including that of financing the meeting, remained and the definite date and place—January 6–8, 1904, in Carnegie Hall, New York—were not set until October. Final notices went out at that time and the financial problem was resolved in such a way, according to Washington's already cited letter of October 28, that none of the participants had to "feel obligated to any individual or organization."

Meanwhile, A. C. McClurg and Company, in Chicago, had issued Du Bois' classic, *The Souls of Black Folk*, containing among other essays the chapter "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others," in which was expressed the core of Du Bois' differences with the Tuskegee viewpoint.

Washington, writing to Du Bois two months prior to the conference, formulated its purpose in one sentence: "Of course the main object of our New York Conference is to try to agree upon certain fundamental principles and to see in what way we understand or misunderstand each other and correct mistakes as far as possible."⁶

Du Bois, in a confidential memorandum prepared shortly before the meeting for the "anti-Washington" contingent—consisting, the memorandum said, of Kelly Miller, Clement G. Morgan, E. H. Harris, Frederick L. McGhee, Archibald H. Grimke, and himself—enumerated with some fullness what he called the "Principles of Anti-Washington men." These were:

1. Opposition to any organization or person which does not stand for:
 - a. The right of Negroes to vote on exactly the same terms as other citizens vote.
 - b. Equal civil rights.
 - c. Educational opportunities according to ability including college, normal, industrial and common school training.
2. Full, candid and open criticism of Mr. Washington's attitude on
 - a. The suffrage and office holding.
 - b. Civil rights.
 - c. College and industrial training.
3. Refusal to take part in this meeting or any meeting or any organization where the right of free discussion of Mr. Washington's attitude or other influential men is not allowed.

In addition, this memorandum contained the following "Notes":

1. The tactics of the pro-Washington men⁷ will take one or more of the following forms:
 - a. Conciliation and compromise.
 - b. Irritation and brow-beating.

- c. Silent shutting off of discussion by closure methods. Come prepared therefore, in case of
 - a. to be firm and hammer at the principles and Washington's record.
 - b. to keep good temper and insist on free speech.
 - c. to protest against closure or underhand methods even to the extent of leaving the meeting.

Bring every speech or letter or record of Washington you can lay your hands on so that he can face his record in print.⁸

The main issue of this meeting is *Washington*, refuse to be sidetracked.

Of the meeting itself little direct record remains. A full airing of views does appear to have been achieved, notwithstanding some irritation within the Du Bois contingent at the fact that Andrew Carnegie and Lyman Abbott (formerly an editor of *Harper's* and then editor of *The Outlook*) favored the participants with addresses full of praise for Washington.

According to a letter written by Du Bois in 1907, he told Washington "frankly behind closed doors with the other men present, the things we objected to in his program. We did not object to industrial education, we did not object to his enthusiasm for its advancement, we did object to his attacks upon higher training and upon his general attitude of belittling the race and not putting enough stress upon voting and things of that sort."⁹

Organizationally, the immediate result of the conference was the appointment of a committee of three—Washington, Du Bois, and Hugh M. Browne of Cheyney, Pennsylvania, a Washington man—whose function was to appoint a Committee of Twelve. The larger committee was to serve in the capacity of a clearing and steering organ for the Black people.

Early in July 1904 this subcommittee met in New York and selected its Committee of Twelve with the vote almost always going two to one against Du Bois, with the

result that the committee became a clearly pro-Washington unit. This Committee of Twelve then adopted "Suggestions" as a guide which in addition to administrative matters stated that "for the present" its work "shall be mainly directed in the following channels";

Turning the attention of the race to the importance of constructive, progressive effort, and the attention of the country to Negro successes.

Emphasizing and keeping before the public, points of agreement rather than points of difference amongst us. . . .

Correcting errors and misstatements concerning the progress and activities of the race, as well as making known the truth regarding the acts of the white race affecting us.

That the central office . . . have power to bring and bear its influence upon emergency conditions that may arise from time to time in any state, county or municipality.

That the central office shall utilize as a medium of doing this work the press, North and South, black and white, the pulpit platform, printed circulars, private correspondence, and any other means that may be deemed wise.

That as far as possible, the central office shall collect and tabulate data bearing upon the condition and progress of the race, as well as the relation of other races to our own.

That the foregoing suggestions be carried out with a view of perfecting a larger and more systematic effort in the unification of the race.

The secretary of the committee, in sending this information to Du Bois, closed by adding a "SPECIAL" note reading: "Shall we add to the 'Suggestions for the Committee of Twelve'? 'And keep before the race the importance of voting at municipal, state and national elections, and especially the payment of all taxes and especially that class of taxes which are a consideration for voting.'"¹⁰

That this basic demand of the Du Bois contingent was

not included in the "Suggestions" for the committee, but presented in this form, indicates how potent was the Washington influence even at its origin.

Another meeting was scheduled for the end of the same summer, to be held in St. Louis. Du Bois, acting upon his physician's advice, informed Washington that he could not attend and requested postponement, but the meeting was held as scheduled nevertheless. Here Washington, as chairman of the Committee of Twelve and director of its executive committee, emerged as the predominant power. As a result of this and the fact that the funds of the committee came from a secret source—believed by Du Bois to be the pocket of Andrew Carnegie—Du Bois promptly resigned from the Committee of Twelve.¹¹

Dr. Du Bois, in a letter written several months after his resignation, stated that he had become convinced by the entire episode "that there was no use trying to cooperate with a man who would act like that. . . . Whatever I can do to promote harmony I shall do so but I will not put myself under the control and command of Mr. Washington."¹²

Soon after his resignation the flow of funds to Atlanta University was curtailed and efforts on his part to locate other teaching positions were not successful. Du Bois gave organizational expression to the split with Tuskegee by launching in 1905 the Niagara Movement, itself a forerunner, in part, of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People with which Du Bois was associated from its founding in 1909.

Meanwhile, the Committee of Twelve expired from innocuous desuetude, having to show for its existence nothing more permanent than a few pamphlets.¹³

This entire episode is of significance in that it illuminates the ideas, personalities, and methods of two different elements in Black leadership at the turn of the present century. Here was a planned effort to neutralize

the expression, in however limited a form, of principled opposition to the continued superexploitation of one-tenth of the American population. The failure of that effort belongs in the stirring history of the Afro-American liberation movement.

«IX»

The Niagara Movement

"I suppose that if some half-dozen men at any time earnestly set their hearts on something coming about which is not discordant with nature, it will come to pass one day or other; because it is not by accident that an idea comes into the heads of a few; rather they are pushed on, and forced to speak or act by something stirring in the heart of the world which would otherwise be left without expression."

William Morris, *The Decorative Arts*

Important to the development of industrial capitalism in the United States during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries was its conquest of the South. Racism and violence were fundamental to the destruction of popular resistance to that conquest. Violent racism would produce a subordinate and especially exploitable Black labor supply of about nine millions; it would restrain development of effective class consciousness among millions of white workers; it would justify overseas expansion and vitiate national democratic processes.

The Tuskegee Machine, managed by Booker T. Washington, represented a favored technique to achieve acquiescence by Black people. The Niagara Movement, with W. E. B. Du Bois its chief inspiration and leader,

represented a major obstacle to the consolidation and retention of such subordination.

The financing of the Tuskegee Machine reflected its purpose and nature. It was supported in part by the state of Alabama and in largest part by multimillionaire industrialists and bankers such as Andrew Carnegie, H. H. Rogers, Collis P. Huntington, William H. Baldwin, Henry Clews, Robert C. Ogden, Julius Rosenwald, and Jacob Schiff, assisted by members of the Southern "aristocracy" such as J. L. M. Curry of Alabama, John M. Parker of Louisiana, Alfred H. Stone of Mississippi, and Henry Watterson of Kentucky.

Under the aegis of the Machine and its creators, maintainers, and servitors, subordination was to be garished with charity and justified by a paternalistic racism. This approach contrasted with that favored by Ben Tillman, Tom Watson, Cole Blease, and James Vardaman, according to which Black subordination was to be maintained by brute force and justified by a fierce racism. Between the two, fundamental agreement existed; differences, tactically consequential, were really peripheral. Each performed a "division of labor" which made more possible achieving the common purpose: white, oligarchic rule.

Fundamental to the viewpoint which resulted in the Niagara Movement¹ was unequivocal rejection of racism and insistence upon the fundamental equality of mankind. The men and women making up Niagara—republicans, Democrats, Socialists, and independents, religious believers and nonbelievers—all demanded an end to racial discrimination.

The political and ideological differences were significant, of course, and they were pertinent to attitudes toward racism. Some in Niagara thought that the old political parties were hopeless; others did not. Some

thought capitalism was at the root of racism; others did not.

Less basic differences existed within the Tuskegee camp. Some therein viewed elementary and industrial education as stepping stones toward eventual full equality for then "qualified" Blacks. Others viewed such limited education as all that permanently inferior Blacks could absorb or use and as insurance that, thus trained, they would not become socially dangerous. These views conflicted and the second was dominant. With crystallization, those holding the first tended to defect. Oswald Garrison Villard and John E. Milholland, both early supporters of the Tuskegee movement, left to become founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Similarly, the different outlooks in the Niagara Movement produced conflicts which persisted as it became a main foundation of the NAACP. Some carried into the latter their concerns over the "stability" of the existing social order, and particularly the security of private property. Indeed, among some founders of the NAACP—for example, William English Walling—the concern lest revolution beset an order that tolerated so gross an abuse as blatant jim crow was decisive in their minds. With others, like Moorfield Storey, the fear existed that continued jim crow—making impossible the acquiring of significant property by Blacks or, certainly, making insecure their tenure of what property they had—violated basic precepts of American law and endangered the persistence of such precepts.

The fundamental point of difference between Tuskegee and Niagara was that the first was at best paternalistic, the other essentially egalitarian. Niagara reflected the rejection not only of inferiority but also of permanent adolescence; it was an assertion of manhood. Niagara

rejected charity; for Du Bois the answer was not benevolence, but science. Niagara said that the master-slave or guardian-ward or overseer—"hand" relationship had to be ended. It is noteworthy—particularly true with Du Bois though present in Niagara as a whole—that this assertion of full manhood, this rejection of subordination, was meant to apply in the first place to the Afro-American but also to all other dark peoples in the world. One salient neglect in the published literature on the Niagara Movement is failure to give necessary emphasis to this affirmation of adulthood—absolutely basic to the movement—and to the projection of this status as inhering to all peoples everywhere on earth. This was a decidedly revolutionary program, and the last of it has yet to be implemented.

Decisive concern with colored people as such and central worry about the durability of property rights—the first fundamental for Du Bois, the second for such patricians as Villard and Storey—naturally produced differences in emphases and, as the contradiction intensified, antagonisms in positions and programs. Present as the Niagara Movement moved into the larger stream of the NAACP, it continued throughout the life of the latter and remains significant in today's movement.

In this connection, I question Professor Grantham's conclusion in his illuminating essay on "The Progressive Movement and the Negro." He writes:

The Progressive movement came to be associated by the more militant Negro leaders with the Booker T. Washington school of thought. The failure of Roosevelt and then of Wilson to include the Negroes in their agendas for progress, the death of Washington, and the frustration of Negro aspirations in the World War precipitated a new unity among Negro leaders and an acceptance of the philosophy of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. . . . The Progressive movement, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the

climate of Progressivism, did bring some advances for American Negroes. There were the indirect benefits of Progressive legislation and gains deriving from humanitarian agencies. But in a larger sense the Progressive movement passed over the Negro question and, ironically, by doing so helped to promote the militant approach to the Problem that most Progressives would have abhorred.²

On the contrary, I would say that one of the outstanding achievements of the Niagara Movement and Du Bois was that despite enormous odds they succeeded in forcing the Progressive movement—certainly many individuals in that movement—to pay *some* attention to the Negro question. After Cable and Tourgée, there was a hiatus of perhaps ten years during which neglect of the question was well nigh universal among liberal, Left, and Progressive circles. It was largely the speaking and writing of Du Bois—his Atlanta Conferences, his carefully prepared and excellently delivered papers, and his masterful essays—that induced this change. Du Bois' essay output was enormous, but perhaps most influential were: "The Storm and Stress in the Black World," in *Dial*, April 16, 1901; "The Spawn of Slavery: The Convict Lease System in the South," in *Missionary Review of the World*,* October 1901; a series of five articles on "The Black North," appearing in the *New York Times Magazine Supplement*, November 17–December 15, 1901; and "Of the Training of Black Men," *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1902.

The last-named article made a very powerful impact, stating with characteristic beauty and power the basic elements of the Niagara Movement, though preceding Niagara by almost three years:

*This *Review* was then a very influential journal, published in New York by Funk & Wagnalls.

Is not life more than meat, and the body more than raiment? And men ask this today all the more eagerly because of sinister signs in recent educational movements. The tendency is here, born of slavery and quickened to renewed life by the crazy imperialism of the day, to regard human beings as among the material resources of a land to be trained with an eye single to future dividends. Race-prejudices, which keep brown and black men in their "places," we are coming to regard as useful allies with such a theory, no matter how much they may dull the ambition and sicken the hearts of struggling human beings. And above all, we daily hear that an education that encourages aspiration, that sets the loftiest of ideals and seeks as an end culture and character rather than bread-winning, is the privilege of white men and the danger and delusion of black.

Will the Negro forever abide his present status? Du Bois asked. He answered: "No. The dangerously clear logic of the Negro's position will more and more loudly assert itself in that day when increasing wealth and more intricate social organization preclude the South from being, as it so largely is, simply an armed camp for intimidating black folk." He warned: "And as the black third of the land grows in thrift and skill, unless skillfully guided in its larger philosophy, it must more and more brood over the red past and the creeping, crooked present, until it grasps a gospel of revolt and revenge and throws its new-found energies athwart the current of advance."

The warning of revolutionary waves and the suggestion that more than "industrial education" is required to thwart or channel it is in that sense akin to the worries of a Villard and a Storey (or a Roosevelt and Wilson, for that matter). But the condemnation of the present is so intense, the denunciation of racism so unequivocal, and the demand for full manhood status so insistent, that the cautions and promises are muted. How devastating was such a phrase as: "Even today the masses of the Negroes

see all too clearly the anomalies of their position and the moral crookedness of yours."

Du Bois insisted that the final, basic "function of the Negro college" is that "it must develop men," and he closed:

I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not. Across the color line I move arm in arm with Balzac and Dumas, where smiling men and welcoming women glide in gilded halls. . . . I summon Aristotle and Aurelius and what soul I will, and they come all graciously with no scorn nor condescension. So, wed with Truth, I dwell above the Veil. Is this the life you grudge us, O knightly America? Is this the life you long to change into the dull red hideousness of Georgia?

This essay forms one of those included in Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk*, certainly one of the most influential collections of essays in the history of the English language.*

If one examines the list of the original officers and the General Committee founding the NAACP he will conclude, I think, that significant segments of the Progressive movement finally comprehended that the Afro-American's position was an outstanding challenge to, and opportunity for, that movement. The list included Moorfield Storey, the long-time president of the Anti-Imperialist League, formerly Charles Sumner's secretary and then an outstanding Boston attorney; William English Walling, a Socialist leader; John E. Milholland, a New York industrialist and leader in the Constitution League; Oswald Garrison Villard, of both Abolitionist

*The preface is dated February 1, 1903; first appearing in the spring of 1903, in its fifth edition by 1904, in its eighth by 1909 (with an English edition published in London by Constable in 1905); by 1938 the 22nd edition of the McClurg imprint was issued. In 1953 it was reissued with significant changes in New York; in 1959 in Paris; in 1961 in paper by Fawcett Publications and a second printing of that edition in 1964. There have been several additional editions in the last half of the 1960s; all are seriously defective.

and railroad-building families, who then was owner of the *New York Post* and *The Nation*; and John Dewey, Florence Kelley, Jane Addams, Charles Edward Russell, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, the Reverend John Haynes Holmes, Mary White Ovington, Albert E. Pillsbury, Clarence Darrow, and Professor E. R. A. Seligman. All are names prominently associated with the social and political outlook characterizing the Progressive movement, with a notable admixture of socialist figures.

That movement's concern for overcoming gross social injustices while simultaneously assuring structural continuity and averting decisive threats to property relationships is illustrated in terms of the so-called Negro question in the years of Niagara by the remarks of William English Walling and Moorfield Storey, both leading white figures.

The former, having recently returned with his wife Anna Strunsky from a visit to her native Russia and being appalled there by the fierce tyranny, government-sponsored pogromist atmosphere, and seething rebelliousness,³ was shocked by the lynching and race riot that shattered Lincoln's home town of Springfield, Illinois, in August 1908. Writing about this in *The Independent*, September 3, 1908, under the title, "The Race War in the North," he reported that most of the white townspeople "had no shame" and that the leading newspaper of the city, *The Illinois State Journal*, defended the bloodletting with these words: "It was not the fact of the whites' hatred toward the negroes, but of the negroes' own misconduct, general inferiority or unfitness for free institutions that were at fault."

Walling warned that with such ideas justifying such conduct—in Lincoln's home town nearly a century after his birth—either racial discrimination had to be fought and eliminated or it would make over the entire nation in the image of Vardaman and Tillman. He concluded this

article—which more than any other single piece of writing led directly to the 1909 Conference on the Negro, which in turn led to the creation of the NAACP—thusly:

The day these methods become general in the North every hope of political democracy will be dead, other weaker races and classes will be persecuted in the North as in the South, public education will undergo an eclipse, and American civilization will await either a rapid degeneration or another profounder and more revolutionary civil war, which shall obliterate not only the remains of slavery but all the other obstacles to a free democratic evolution that have grown up in its wake.

Yet who realizes the seriousness of the situation, and what large and powerful body of citizens is ready to come to their aid?

Moorfield Storey, in a letter written early in 1911, has a different emphasis, but the quality of his main concern was not dissimilar from Walling's, and was also reflective of basic strands in the Progressive movement. "I write," Storey began, "because I want, if I can, to correct a misapprehension touching the purpose of the National Association." He continued:

I have heard it stated that some of our friends object to the movement on the ground that Mr. Washington and Mr. [H. B.] Frissell [Principal of Hampton Institute in Virginia] are not members of it while Mr. Du Bois is, and the impression seems to be that there is a certain hostility on our part toward Mr. Washington and those who support him.

This is an entire misapprehension, so far at least as I am concerned, and I am very sure so far as the leaders in the movement are concerned. I am, myself, a great admirer of both Mr. Washington and Mr. Frissell, and believe that they are doing a great work for the race. Their purpose is to help the Negroes become self-supporting, to acquire property, and to become an important industrial factor in the communities where they live, and this is undoubtedly most desirable.

Storey then pinpointed two interrelated matters that, he thought, required the national association:

But after their property has been acquired, and after the Negroes have become what Mr. Washington wants to make them, it is very important that their rights to the property and its undisturbed enjoyment should be secured, and there is today no adequate effort made to accomplish this result. . . .

Moreover, it is true that there are many men among the Negroes who are capable of greater things than mere mechanical pursuits. The Negroes must have leaders. . . . Such leadership involves education of the highest kind.⁴

Storey's insistence that the outlooks of the NAACP and Mr. Washington were simply complementary was disingenuous, for his own expression of the purposes of the former, as he understood them, demonstrated significant differences. Walling's insistence in the aforementioned 1908 *Independent* article—that "we [*i.e.*, white people] must come to treat the Negro on a plane of absolute political and social equality"—also indicated a significant difference. All these were certainly in Du Bois' mind in this period and formed essential components of the Niagara Movement. Insofar as they did, they reflected the sharp break from Tuskegee that Niagara represented. It should be added that while Du Bois did not hide his differences with Washington—by 1902 he was publicly emphasizing them—he privately condemned Washington much more sharply than he did publicly. But this condemnation was never *ad hominem*, never nasty, and never less than candid. Two instances will be offered.

On April 24, 1905, Professor Albert Bushnell Hart of Harvard, one of Du Bois' teachers and friends, wrote Du Bois:

I am rather troubled to find that a great many people suppose that you head a kind of opposition to Booker Washington's ideas; so far as I understand, there is no innate lack of harmony between your purpose in life and his. You take a certain thing

which must be done, viz. the higher education of those who can profit from it; he takes another end of the same problem; naturally each of you thinks that his interest is the more important; if you did not, you would exchange activities. But I do not see how either excludes the other. . . . I have actually found people who seemed to suppose that you and Trotter were working together.

Du Bois replied from Atlanta much later, October 9, 1905:

As to Mr. Washington, the people who think I am one of those who oppose many of his ideas are perfectly correct. I have no personal opposition to him—I honor much of his work. But his platform has done the race infinite harm and I'm working against it with all my might. Mr. Washington is today the chief instrument in the hands of a N.Y. clique who are seeking to syndicate the Negro and settle the problem on the trust basis. They have bought and bribed newspapers and men.⁵

The second example has been published earlier.⁶ The New York financier and philanthropist, George Foster Peabody, expressed concern to leading officials of Atlanta University as to Du Bois' radicalism, alleged sympathy with the very militant William Monroe Trotter of the *Boston Guardian*, and hostility to Washington. Dr. Horace Bumstead, the university president, and Dr. Edmund Ware, its chaplain and future president, both conveyed to Du Bois the concern felt by Peabody.

Du Bois replied December 28, 1903, with characteristic honesty and boldness—not to say rashness. He had his differences with Trotter, he said, but infinitely preferred the *Guardian* man to the Tuskegee one. Du Bois' closing paragraph read:*

As between him and Mr. Washington I unhesitatingly believe Mr. Trotter to be far nearer the right in his contentions and

*In my *Documentary History of the Negro People* (New York, 1951), pp. 881-883, this letter is given in full but it is incorrectly dated as 1905.

only pray such restraint and judgment on Mr. Trotter's part as will save our cause, his sincerity and unpurchasable soul in these days when every energy is being used to put black men into slavery and when Mr. Washington is leading the way backward.

The president of Atlanta later wrote Du Bois that his letter to Peabody generally pleased the Trustees, though they felt the final paragraph could have been omitted. Bumstead said he had defended the letter in its entirety though he too felt that the final paragraph was unwise. Of course the final paragraph was the whole point for Du Bois and for Niagara.

The Du Bois emphasis, the Storey emphasis, and the Walling emphasis constitute the main ingredients in that coalition which created the NAACP. To contrast the latter with the Progressive movement, as Professor Grantham seems to do, is, I think, an error. And to add that the Progressive movement in having "passed over the Negro question" thereby "helped to promote the militant approach to the problem that most Progressives would have abhorred," compounds the error.

The coalition functioned reasonably well, though always with strain and stress. The point in the first years of the twentieth century was to get some national recognition that the jim crow system was wrong, harmful, and needed to be and could be undone. With this minimum the coalition came into being. Thereafter, the sharp differences within it naturally tended to grow, which from time to time produced crises within the NAACP, shifts in its direction, and more or less dissatisfaction with it among varying segments of the Black and white communities. Far from having "helped promote the militant approach," it probably hindered this. Insofar as the Progressive movement generally abhorred such "militant" approaches—I agree with Professor Grantham that it did—the absorption of the NAACP by the spirit and

outlook of the Progressive movement helps explain the former's generally mild line.

Advances in Afro-American historiography have been momentous during the past thirty years. Much, of course, remains to be done; one of the sharpest needs is for greater attention to the context within which Afro-American history develops. One should examine specifics such as the Niagara Movement in the light of relevant developments at least within the United States and, ideally, throughout the world. Clearly, humanity's history forms one fabric, if not discernible design, and all the separate strands are interwoven.

The cry of the Niagara Movement—we Blacks are people, and we who are adult are in fact adult and we who are men and women are indeed men and women—cannot be understood outside the context of a resurgence of racism after the crushing of Reconstruction and, especially, after the crushing of the Populist movement. As we have seen, jim crow was legalized throughout the South and much of the North, with Supreme Court concurrence, beginning in the late 1880s; force was systematically employed against Negroes, the most dramatic symbols of which were the recurrence of mass slaughters—so-called "race riots"—and lynchings, occurring at the rate of two or three every week, for about twenty years, commencing in 1890. Niagara was organized in the context of institutionalized peonage; of almost universal impoverishment. Such obscenities appeared as the best-selling works of Thomas Dixon; a volume affirming *The Negro a Beast*, by Charles Carroll, a Christian minister, published in 1900 by the American Book and Bible House; and a study of the Afro-American published for the American Economic Association and authored by the chief statistician of the Prudential Life Insurance Corporation,⁶ "demonstrating" that because of

his own ineradicable vices and failings the Black American was destined to extermination, that misguided philanthropists could only worsen matters, that the superior white peoples had the duty to be served by the inferior dark ones or to harry such otherwise "useless" folk from the earth.

In this period the executive board of the Socialist party explained to the inquiring International Socialist Bureau that the source of lynching lay in capitalism—that is, capitalism produced criminals and maniacs and other "now lynchable human degenerates"!⁷

In this period Booker T. Washington's friend, Governor Oates of Alabama, at a Tuskegee Commencement in 1894, became enraged when a preceding Black speaker, John C. Dancey, paid tribute to New Englanders who had helped Negro education. Governor Oates announced:

I have written this speech for you [waving the manuscript at the audience] but I will not deliver it. I want to give you niggers a few words of plain talk and advice. No such address as you have just listened to is going to do you any good; it's going to spoil you. You had better not listen to such speeches. You might just as well understand that this is a white man's country, so far as the South is concerned, and we are going to make you keep your place. Understand that. I have nothing more to say to you.⁸

From Alvin Borgquest of Clark University in Massachusetts came the following letter, dated April 3, 1905, to Du Bois at Atlanta:

We are pursuing an investigation here on the subject of crying as an expression of the emotions, and should like very much to learn about its peculiarities among the colored people. We have been referred to you as a person competent to give us information upon the subject.

We desire especially to know about the following salient aspects:

1. Whether the negro sheds tears.

At the same time opposition to racist, antihumanist and antidemocratic thinking and activity was present. This opposition made fewer headlines; it had an uphill fight. But it was an important feature of the total context within which Du Bois and Niagara could develop. Some coincidences in dates are illuminating: Hull House founded in 1889; the Anti-Imperialist League in 1899; the Social-Democratic party, 1900; the Constitution League, 1904; the League for Industrial Democracy, 1905; the Industrial Workers of the World, 1905; and Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* appeared in 1905. With these, behind the Veil, appear the National Afro-American League, 1889; the Citizens Equal Rights Association, 1890; the National Association of Colored Women, 1893; the American Negro Academy, 1897; the Negro Business Men's League, 1900; the *Boston Guardian* newspaper in 1901; the *Voice of the Negro* in Atlanta in 1904; the *Chicago Defender* in 1905; Du Bois' *Souls of Black Folk* in 1903; and the launching of Niagara in 1905.

Early in 1902 a "colored Students Club" was formed at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Its organizer was Eugene Marshall of Detroit, a law student at the university. The club's aim was to help find jobs, housing, and medical services for Black students. Marshall was quoted in the university newspaper as declaring: "There is a prevailing discrimination against the race in boarding and eating places." In addition to Marshall, at least five other Black students are identified by name in contemporary sources as members of this club.⁹

At the University of Pennsylvania, early in 1902, a Du Bois Club was formed by twelve Black students. On February 26 Mr. John B. Taylor, Jr. its secretary, wrote

to Du Bois telling him of the club's aim "to draw the colored students closer together, discuss current topics and better ourselves intellectually." Du Bois' approval was forthcoming in a letter dated March 3. Mr. George Rice Harvey, vice-president of Virginia Union University in Richmond, wrote Du Bois on October 15, 1904, telling him that "we have our Du Bois Lyceum here, we have your picture framed in our library, and we are greatly interested in your work and what you write."

From opposite ends of the movement's spectrum, Du Bois received letters of encouragement in 1904, both referring specifically to his magnificent "Credo" essay published in *The Independent* in 1904. From Tuskegee, Mrs. Adella Hunt Logan wrote October 10: "Your Credo in the current issue of *The Independent* is what I call a classical jewel. Do please have it put on good hanging card and let us distribute it for the edification of souls." Du Bois followed the suggestion, and a card with the credo printed upon it suitable for framing was produced and hung upon the walls of Black homes by the thousands thereafter. At almost the same moment, from Boston, Mrs. William (Geraldine L.) Trotter, wrote the Doctor (December 1, 1904) on the stationery of *The Guardian*: "Some of us Boston women, who are very proud of you and very much interested in the welfare of our Race are anxious to print your Creed and sell it, the money to go to a work which we are aiding."*

In 1894 Franz Boas, vice-president of the Anthropological Section of the American Association for the

*Reflecting the universality of the sense of stirring and the central position of Du Bois in this is the letter he received from F. A. McKenzie, a teacher at the Shoshoni Agency, Wyoming. Dated Jan. 9, 1904, it projected a plan for a Fraternity of American Indians whose objective would be the achievement of full citizenship rights. Du Bois replied Jan. 16, 1904: "I think your plan most excellent and would be glad to aid it in any way. The uplift must always come from the top and training and unification of leaders is the great thing."

Advancement of Science, was casting doubt upon the existence of "pure" races and upon the presence of particular and immutable capacities—higher or lower—in certain races, and was emphasizing the weight of sociohistoric environment in explaining levels of development.¹⁰ For the next fifteen years few white scholars would be closer to Du Bois and more actively associated with his Atlanta Conference efforts and his crusade against racism than was Boas.

One is inevitably reminded of Du Bois in reading *The Function of Education in a Democratic Society* (1897) by Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard during the years Du Bois was there. Eliot argued that education hitherto had been the privilege and the instrument of ruling cliques, that democratic education was necessarily as new as democratic societies, that the nature of the one was as little understood as the potentialities of the other. But, wrote Eliot, in democratic education, "the school should teach every child . . . that the supreme attainment for an individual is vigor and loveliness of character." And, as to character, Eliot defined democratic virtues as "fidelity to all forms of duty which demand courage, self-denial, and zeal, and loyal devotion to the democratic ideals of freedom, serviceableness, unity, toleration, public justice, and public joyfulness."

Eliot's remarks are to be read also in the context of the late nineteenth-century battle to change the curriculum of the state universities, which were geared "primarily to provide technical education in such subjects as agriculture, mining and engineering." Protestors appeared "who insisted that liberal education could not be the monopoly of private colleges and the wealthy class"; they waged "struggle with tight-fisted state legislatures for money to implement programs to educate young men of modest means in the liberal arts as well as the professions and vocations."¹¹ This applied only to white young men—and only to men. At the same time, not only

was the battle spreading against color restriction but also against restricting higher education to the male of the species. This was also international, of course. Thus H. G. Wells wrote:¹² "The Education Act of 1871 [in England] was not an Act for a common universal education, it was an Act to educate the lower classes for employment on lower-class lines, and with specially-trained, inferior teachers who had no university quality." Only in this overall international context can Du Bois' mind and drive and efforts leading to Niagara and post-Niagara be properly comprehended.

The writings of Felix Adler, often in correspondence with Du Bois; of Josiah Royce, one of Du Bois' influences at Harvard; of William James, not only Du Bois' teacher but also his friend at Harvard; of Henry Demarest Lloyd, in frequent touch with Du Bois; of John Spencer Bassett, also in correspondence with Du Bois; of Clarence Darrow, another confidant of Du Bois; of Charles H. Cooley of the University of Michigan and author of *Human Nature and Social Order* (1902); of Simon W. Patten of the University of Pennsylvania and his *The New Basis of Civilization* (1907)—all are reminiscent of much that Du Bois was saying and writing in the late 1890s and early 1900s and was advocating in the Niagara Movement. Of course, the influence here went both ways: to and from Du Bois and Niagara.

I believe that Du Bois was the first Black scholar to be taken seriously and treated as a peer within the professional learned societies in the United States. He clearly estimated this very highly in his supreme undertaking—namely, to force upon the brain and heart of the United States a serious and continual occupation with the so-called Negro question. That which was central to Du Bois in the years prior to 1910 cannot be separated from Niagara.

His doctoral dissertation on *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade* was Harvard Historical Studies

Number One (1896); his *The Philadelphia Negro* was Number 14 in the Studies of the University of Pennsylvania (1899). The *Annals* of the American Academy of Political and Social Science published his paper on "The Relations of the Negroes to the Whites in the South" in its number dated July 1901, and reissued this as Publication Number 311 of the academy later that same year. In the *American Journal of Sociology*, May 1908 (XIII, 834–838), appeared Du Bois' "Race Friction Between Black and White"; in December 1909 Du Bois was the first Black to present a paper before an annual meeting of the American Historical Association and its substance was published in the *American Historical Review* (July 1910) under the title, "Reconstruction and its Benefits" (XV, 781–789). This pioneering paper was to appear in developed form twenty-five years later in Du Bois' masterpiece, *Black Reconstruction*.

Du Bois' influence and Du Bois' sources went to and came from the entire world. His papers, even prior to 1910, show this to be true especially of Ireland, England, Africa (particularly what was then called the Gold Coast, and South Africa), the West Indies, the Philippines, and much of continental Europe. Illustrating the latter is Du Bois' friendship with Max Weber. Weber corresponded with Du Bois in 1904 when in the United States and solicited and published an essay by Du Bois in the journal he edited.¹³

Weber was enormously impressed by *Souls of Black Folk* and in 1905 attempted, unsuccessfully, to have a German translation produced. He wrote Du Bois from New York City on November 17, 1904, thanking him for his work and adding: "I am quite sure to come back to your country as soon as possible and especially to the South, because I am absolutely convinced that the 'color line' problem will be the paramount problem of the time to come, here and everywhere in the world."

Casely Hayford, one of the great names in the history of the struggle for African independence, wrote Du Bois from the Gold Coast on June 8, 1904, as follows:

I have recently had the pleasure of reading your great work "The Souls of Black Folk," and it occurred to me that if leading thinkers of the African race in America had the opportunity of exchanging thought with thinkers of the race in West Africa, this century would be likely to see the race problem solved.

Hayford began this interchange by sending Du Bois several of his own volumes.

The domination of Northern philanthropy by racist views was a great and most direct influence upon Du Bois and the Niagara development. Louis R. Harlan has convincingly presented the evidence of this; summarizing the data, as already crystallized by 1901, he writes: "These spokesmen for the philanthropic capitalist [such as Lyman Abbott of the *Outlook*, Walter Hines Page of *World's Work* and the Reverend Charles H. Parkhurst] did not so much change Northern opinion as indicate its final [*sic*] capitulation to racialism. Others had already taken the same path to reunion, and racial discrimination was spreading in the North." What this meant specifically, in the areas most important to Du Bois, was, for example, the fact that with all the publicity about benevolence and charity—with the Southern Education Board and the Peabody Fund and the Carnegie money—less was spent in North Carolina upon Negro rural schools in 1905 than in 1895!¹⁴

The published literature has either ignored or minimized Du Bois' early interest in African connections. Actually such interest was present not only for Du Bois personally but also formed a hitherto unnoticed feature of the Niagara Movement itself.

Du Bois states that the first projection of Pan-

fricanism came from Henry Sylvester-Williams, born in Trinidad in 1868, a teacher there, who later studied and practiced law in England, and who visited South Africa, Canada, and the United States. In England, Sylvester-Williams associated closely with West Africans and advised visiting African dignitaries. In the late 1890s he conceived the idea of a world conference of African and African-derived peoples. An African Association was formed in London, probably in 1899, and it projected the holding of a "Pan-African Conference." The conference was held at Westminster Town Hall, July 23-25, 1900. Present were about thirty delegates, including some women, from the United States, Haiti, Abyssinia, Liberia, the British West Indies, and West Africa.

The Lord Bishop of London welcomed the delegates at the opening ceremonies and, according to Du Bois, "a promise was obtained from Queen Victoria, through Joseph Chamberlain"—then Colonial Secretary—not to "overlook the interest and welfare of the native races."

Sylvester-Williams served as general secretary of this conference. Its president was Alexander Walters, bishop of the AME Zion Church, a close associate of both Booker T. Washington and Du Bois, who by about 1907 was to swing his support definitely to Du Bois.

Du Bois was chairman of the Committee on Address; his words were issued in the name of the conference under the title, "To the Nations of the World." Here occurs Du Bois' famous statement that the color line is the problem of the twentieth century. It appears in the following context:

The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line, the question as to how far differences of race—which show themselves chiefly in the color of the skin and the texture of the hair—will hereafter be made the basis of denying to over half the world the right of sharing to their utmost ability the opportunities and privileges of modern civilization.

In the 1900 appeal, too, appears a paragraph containing matter central to Du Bois' thinking for the next six decades and basic to his conception of Niagara. It reads:

The modern world must remember that in this age when the ends of the world are being brought so near together, the millions of black men in Africa, America, and the Islands of the Sea, not to speak of the brown and yellow myriads elsewhere, are bound to have a great influence upon the world in the future, by reason of sheer numbers and physical contact. If now the world of culture bends itself toward giving Negroes and other dark men the largest and broadest opportunity for education and self-development, then this contact and influence is bound to have a beneficial effect upon the world and hasten progress. But if, by reason of carelessness, prejudice, greed and injustice, the black world is to be exploited and ravished and degraded, the results must be deplorable, if not fatal—not simply to them, but to the high ideals of justice, freedom and culture which a thousand years of Christian civilization have held before Europe.

There follow specific proposals for various areas of the world; for the United States there is this paragraph:

Let not the spirit of Garrison, Phillips and Douglass wholly die out in America; may the conscience of a great nation rise and rebuke all dishonesty and unrighteous oppression toward the American Negro, and grant to him the right of franchise, security of person and property, and generous recognition of the great work he has accomplished in a generation toward raising nine millions of human beings from slavery to manhood.¹⁵

One of the papers delivered in the 1901 meeting of the American Negro Academy held in Washington in March (at this time Du Bois was president of the academy) was a report on this Pan-African Conference given by Bishop Walters. On March 1, 1902, a prospectus for the African

Development Company was issued from a Philadelphia office and signed by T. J. Minton, chairman, Du Bois, secretary, and H. T. Kealing, treasurer. The purpose was to raise a capital stock of \$50,000; the stated aim was: "To acquire lands in East Central Africa to be used for the cultivation of coffee and other products; to establish and maintain the means for transport by land, river, lakes and ocean; to establish and maintain trading stations, and to develop the natural resources of the lands acquired."

The prospectus stated that "the promoters" possessed "contracts with certain native chiefs for valuable concessions of land." Du Bois' papers show a continuing interest in African affairs in the years that follow but the African Development Company seems never to have reached the stage of incorporation, let alone actual operation.

After the great success of his *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois received numerous requests for contributions from his pen. Rather surprisingly, one was from Richard Lloyd Jones, an editor of *Collier's Weekly*. In a letter dated January 18, 1904, Jones asked Du Bois to write, in the form of an editorial, a statement of perhaps five hundred words on the Afro-American. Twelve days later Du Bois replied:

Have you ever thought of this: the color line is belting the world today; about it world interests are centering. Would it not be an interesting experiment to start in *Collier's* a column—or half a column—called "Along the Color Line" or the "Voice of the Darker Millions" and put therein from week to week or month to month note and comment on the darker races in America, Africa, Asia, &c., from their standpoint and the standpoint of the serious student and observer, the spirit of it being rather informing and interpretive rather than controversial.

Jones answered on February 3 that he did not feel it was possible for *Collier's* to undertake this project, but he did express interest in a five hundred-word statement on the general idea. The article he received was published in the June 18 issue. Du Bois had to wait until he published his own magazines—*The Moon*, commencing December 1905; *The Horizon*, commencing January 1907; and *The Crisis*, commencing November 1910—before his idea could be realized.

In November 1904, in Liverpool, England, the Ethiopian Progressive Association was founded; in March 1905 a revised version of its constitution and bylaws was published. In that form a copy went to Du Bois from the secretary of the association, Kwesi Ewusi, of the Gold Coast Colony. The association had twenty founding members from England, Sierra Leone, Lagos, Fernando Po, Barbados, Jamaica, Cuba, South Africa, and the Gold Coast.

Its objects were reminiscent of Du Bois' 1900 call "To the Nations of the World": to develop friendship among Africans in England; to "create a bond of union" among all African peoples; to "raise the social status" of all Africans; to "strengthen the friendly relations" among them and all other peoples; and "to discuss . . . matters of vital importance concerning Africa in particular, and the Negro race in general."

In writings on the Niagara Movement, it has hitherto gone unobserved that Pan-Africanism was present not only in the universality of the calls written by Du Bois, beginning in 1905, but also structurally. At the 1906 meeting the constitution was amended to add among its fourteen standing committees "The Pan-African Department."

Nowhere in the constitution or by-laws of the Niagara Movement was membership limited to Negro people. Indeed, Du Bois actually asked Mary White Ovington if

she would consider joining. She replied affirmatively, but while she was present, as a reporter for the *New York Post* at the 1906 meeting and remained in constant touch with Du Bois for many years thereafter,* in fact no white person ever was accepted as either a member or an associate member of Niagara.

Niagara was a movement of both men and women. While Mary White Ovington is in error in stating in her autobiography¹⁶ that women were present at its founding meeting in 1905, they certainly were prominent and numerous thereafter both as full (voting) and associate (nonvoting) members.† A woman's department of the movement maintained activity for about three years. Departments aimed at involving college students and other youth also functioned. In several colleges—both Black institutions and others like Cornell and the University of Pennsylvania—circles of students existed for the specific purpose of studying Du Bois' writings. Elsewhere Du Bois societies and clubs also operated; notable among these was the Du Bois Club among Detroit Black women in the early 1900s and the Du Bois Circle founded in 1906 among Negro women in Baltimore—and still functioning.¹⁷

The Niagara Movement maintained an independent stance in politics. As a movement it did not support any particular party, though it publicly excoriated both Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, especially in the years from 1906 through 1908. It expressed an attitude of keen sympathy toward labor as such. Several of its leading figures—such as the Reverend R. C. Ran-

*Their correspondence commenced, on her initiative, in June 1904. In a letter to Du Bois, dated May 20, 1906, she remarked: "I shall always feel that you started me on my work."

†Among the Du Bois Papers is a listing of those associated with Niagara as of the end of 1906. The names and addresses of 406 people are included: of these, 117 are women.

som, J. M. Waldron, George Frazier Miller, and Du Bois himself—were either wholly or substantially in sympathy with socialism.¹⁸

The bulk of the literature on this pre-World War I period presents Du Bois and Niagara as divorced from, if not hostile or unsympathetic to, the Black masses. This outlook generally is offered in contradistinction to what is asserted to be the mass character of Booker T. Washington and Tuskegee. There is precious little evidence, however, for this conventional view. Washington certainly was the Black figure preferred by the white dominant society; Tuskegee was well financed for most of this period and its political influence was real. The opposite was true of Du Bois and Niagara, but none of this speaks for the idea that the former was a mass figure *among the Black people* and the latter was not.

The evidence seems to indicate that, in the decade prior to World War I, no really mass Black organization existed. But reading the sources convinces this writer that the ideas of Du Bois and the essential thrust of Niagara—equal rights and the assertion of manhood—were infinitely closer to the deepest aspirations of most Blacks than were the urgings toward accommodation and thrift that came out of Tuskegee.

The impression is conveyed that Du Bois was a remote personality who had no real grasp of the needs and nature of the Black masses. Du Bois was above all a scholar and in this sense there was some remoteness; he also seems never to have really enjoyed crowds or large convivial gatherings, although his charm, humor, and gallantry were legendary. But for knowledge of the Black masses no one could approach Du Bois in the years of Niagara. He had made the fullest and most careful study of Afro-American history of any contemporary; he knew more and published more on Negro urban life, North and South, than any contemporary; he made detailed studies for the federal government of several Black Belt areas in

Alabama, Virginia, and southern Georgia;¹⁹ he had lived among poor Black farming folk in Tennessee; he lived for many years in Atlanta; as chief of the Atlanta University Conference for almost two decades before World War I he studied the Negro church, the Black worker and businessman, and problems relating to crime and health among Blacks more carefully than any other single person.

This unrivalled knowledge was at the bedrock of his effectiveness. Without this his literary genius, his monumental energy, and his almost fanatical integrity still would not have made possible his historic accomplishments.

In the Niagara period his—and its—achievements were to advance Black unity; to significantly challenge if not yet dethrone the domination of Tuskegee; to invigorate a whole generation of younger men and women; to project the worldwide unity of dark peoples; and to a degree to help force the so-called Negro question upon America's conscience, especially to the notice of the more progressive sections of the white population. Niagara served also as one of the earliest and most effective organizers of the Black intelligentsia.

It is fitting to publish the names of those who signed the original call for the meeting that founded Niagara; it has not hitherto been done and conflicting and erroneous data appear in secondary accounts. The original call, in printed form, was headed "(Private and Confidential)." Below this appeared the words "The Niagara Movement" and then: "The undersigned fifty-nine gentlemen representing 18 states have joined in a Call for a Conference to meet in the vicinity of Buffalo, N.Y., during the week beginning July 9, 1905." There follow details as to transportation; and the sentence "No ladies are invited."*

*This exclusion was in no way antifeminist—something Du Bois certainly was not. It was related to great problems of security and of accommodations. Actually, it was necessary to hire a meeting place in Canada.

The purpose is stated cryptically: "The Conference expects to sit at least three and not more than five days and to inaugurate a permanent national forward movement." It is signed by Du Bois as "Provisional Secretary."

Actually, sixteen states and the District of Columbia were represented by these fifty-nine men; the listing is herewith given in the same form as in the original (asterisks indicate original signers):

District of Columbia

Dr. H. S. Bailey*
Rev. T. J. Brown
Mr. W. Calvin Chase
Mr. J. W. Cromwell
Mr. A. C. Garner
Prof. W. H. H. Hart*
Mr. L. M. Hershaw
Rev. O. Mitchell
Prof. W. H. Richards*

Georgia

Mr. W. E. B. DuBois*
Prof. John Hope
Dr. L. B. Palmer
Prof. Geo. A. Towns
Prof. M. N. Work

Illinois

Mr. L. B. Anderson
Dr. C. E. Bentley*
Major R. R. Jackson
Mr. Jas. L. Madden*
Mr. E. H. Morris
Dr. A. A. Wesley
Mr. D. R. Wilkins
Mr. E. E. Wilson
Rev. R. R. Wright, Jr.

Iowa

Mr. Geo. H. Woodson*

Kansas

Mr. B. S. Smith

Maryland

Rev. G. R. Waller

Massachusetts

Mr. Robt. Bonner*
Mr. A. M. Bush
Dr. Geo. F. Grant
Mr. E. B. Jourdain*
Mr. C. G. Morgan*
Dr. Chas. Purvis
Rev. R. C. Ransom
Rev. W. H. Scott*
Mr. W. M. Trotter*
Mr. B. R. Wilson

Minnesota

Mr. W. J. Arnold
Mr. W. L. McGhee*
Mr. W. R. Morris

New Jersey

Mr. T. A. Spraggins

New York

Mr. John E. Bruce
Dr. W. M. Lively
Mr. Granville Martin
Rev. Geo. F. Miller*
Capt. Harvey A. Thompson*
Dr. O. M. Waller

North Carolina

Rev. W. H. Ferris

Ohio

Mr. W. P. Dabney
Mr. Geo. H. Jackson
Mr. Harry C. Smith*

Pennsylvania

Mr. W. Justin Carter*
Mr. G. W. Mitchell*

Rhode Island

Rev. Byron Gunner*
Rev. W. H. Thomas
Dr. W. F. Wheatland

Tennessee

Prof. Richard Hill*

Virginia

Prof. J. L. R. Diggs*
Mr. F. H. M. Murray

West Virginia

Mr. J. R. Clifford

The meeting was held at Fort Erie, Canada, on July 11, 12, and 13; present were twenty-nine men, of whom twenty-seven were among the original signers. (The name of one of these is in error; it should be F. L. McGhee of Minnesota.) In addition, A. L. Herndon and J. Max Barber of Georgia attended.

Niagara worked closely with Milholland's Constitution League, of which Du Bois became a Director in 1907. It also labored cooperatively with the American Negro Academy and, especially from 1907 on, with the Afro-American Council. Bishop Walters, the leader of that council, announced in 1908 that he was joining Niagara. Its relations were very cordial also with the National Association of Colored Women, and it had close liaison with the Bishops' Council of the AME and AMEZ churches.

There were six annual meetings of the movement, each in the summer. In 1905 the locale was Fort Erie, Ontario; thereafter, Harper's Ferry, Boston, Oberlin, and two years at Sea Isle City, New Jersey. The final meeting in 1910, after the establishment of the NAACP with Du Bois' acceptance of a leading position therein, seems to have had a main objective of leading William Monroe Trotter to reconsider his refusal to join the association. In a letter from Du Bois to Walling, dated August 16, 1910, he wrote, "I am hoping to get him to the Niagara Movement" (meaning the Sea Isle meeting). Du Bois was not able to persuade the very difficult, suspicious, and stubborn Trotter to adhere to NAACP.

The agenda of the Sea Isle meeting, August 27-30, 1910, was titled "Concentration of Effort through Race Organizations." Surely, the NAACP was the main item for consideration. Du Bois, in joining the NAACP, did so formally in terms of merging Niagara into it. Similarly, Bishop Walters, as one of the association's founders, did so in the name of the Afro-American Council. When F. Morris Murray, business manager of Niagara's official organ *The Horizon*, announced its suspension after its July 1910 number, he stated that "the *Crisis* will fill all unexpired subscriptions to *The Horizon* at the same price per year."

Niagara work had been exhausting and often exasperating for Du Bois. Twice—in the summer and again in December 1907—Du Bois wrote letters of resignation, but did not send them. In many ways he regretted leaving the study and the library; he often begrudged the time needed to persuade and explain and win over; but he stayed with it and through prodigious self-discipline and extraordinary energy managed to combine the life of creativity, scholarship, journalism, and active political-social struggle.

Niagara helped defeat Tuskegee; it helped initiate the modern Afro-American freedom movement; it helped bring into being the NAACP. In historic perspective—if not at the moment to those in the fray—its achievements were great.

Reflecting the change, in part induced by Niagara, are two contrasting letters from Oswald Garrison Villard. No one was a more ardent supporter of Booker T. Washington in the early 1900s than Villard, and his partisanship expressed itself in fund raising to the tune of about one hundred fifty thousand dollars for Tuskegee. Characteristic was this tribute to Washington he published in *The Tuskegee Student* April 28, 1906:

The earnest, inspired leader, modest, retiring, self-controlled and unsparing of self, too big to be affected by the snarling of the envious of his own race or insults offered by some of the other race. Never have I met anyone who has accomplished so much and connects himself with so little of it.

The second letter was written by Villard to Washington personally; it was dated December 13, 1910. It was induced by the published objections from a group calling itself the National Negro Committee to Washington's noncritical speeches made while touring England. The twenty-three men signing the public condemnation of Washington's course and detailing the horrors of racism in the United States included fourteen of the twenty-nine who formed Niagara; the document was written by Du Bois.²⁰ Villard, in the closing days of 1910, wrote Washington:

From my point of view, your philosophy is wrong. You are keeping silent about evils in regard to which you should speak out, and you are not helping the race by portraying all the conditions as favorable. . . . It certainly cannot be unknown to you that a greater and greater percentage of the intellectual

colored people are turning from you, and becoming your opponents and with them a number of white people as well.*

It had now become possible and necessary to commence a broadly based, Black-white movement, dedicated—in the words of the 1906 Address of the Niagara Movement—to achieving “full manhood rights [for the Negro people] . . . every single right that belongs to a freeborn American, political, civil and social.” This was now the explicit aim of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. With its establishment began the modern Black freedom movement, and with its creation disappeared its outstanding harbinger, the Niagara Movement.

*In this connection Louis Harlan notes Villard's distrust of the Hampton-Tuskegee-Carnegie approach and places it within the same period as the formation of Niagara. However, it is clear that Professor Harlan is quoting Villard in 1913 as his source. This obscures the important point of the alteration in Villard's outlook, characteristic of many like Villard, brought about in considerable part by the earlier agitation and protest of Niagara (see Harlan, *op. cit.*, p. 214). James M. McPherson has published material showing that by 1909 Villard had made up his mind that Tuskegee would not do; see the McPherson essay cited in note 1.

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«X»

The Afro-American in World War I

What was the position of the Black people during the years of Wilson's “New Freedom”? What did the salesmen of death promise the ten million Negro citizens during the first “war for democracy”? How did the reality compare with the promise? What were the Negro's demands and how did he go about trying to achieve them?

Wilson let it be known, during his first presidential campaign, that his high humanitarianism encompassed the Black people. On October 16, 1912, he pledged: “Should I become President of the United States, they may count on me for absolute fair dealing and for everything by which I could assist in advancing the interests of their race in the United States.” On the basis of promises like these and Wilson's alleged liberalism in general, one hundred thousand Black voters shifted from Republican to Democratic.

Wilson kept his promise in his inimitable manner. Segregation and jim crow were firmly established in every department of the federal government. Offices hitherto traditionally filled by Negroes—such as Recorder of Deeds in the capitol—were given to deserving white Democrats. Scores of Black federal employees, particularly in the Post Office Department, were summarily dismissed. Disfranchisement, peonage, and lynching (sixty-six instances of this barbarity were re-

ported in 1916 alone) continued unabated, without comment from the White House.

The Black people, true to their militant traditions, did not take these abominations lying down. They fought back in the years immediately preceding and during the Great Deceiver's first administration. A new exodus from the South beginning from 1903 reached flood proportions in 1915-1919—about seven hundred fifty thousand human beings picked themselves up (notwithstanding attempted legal and terroristic restraints) and sought a better life. This migration, unlike earlier ones, represented a movement from rural to urban areas, leading to the proletarianization of a considerable segment of the Black population. This in turn produced a more profound and general economic and political development among the Negro people than had hitherto prevailed. There resulted a threefold increase in the circulation of Negro newspapers and establishment of national Negro organizations such as the Niagara Movement in 1905, the National Equal Rights League in 1907, the NAACP in 1909, the National Race Congress in 1915, and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in the same year. There developed, too, a growing pressure by Black workers to force the AFL hierarchy to discard its policy of exclusion.

The ruling class displayed mounting concern. During his second campaign, Wilson trotted out the old promises togged in his lovely verbiage. One of his most ardent bright young men, Ray Stannard Baker (who became his official biographer), contributed an article to the June 1916 issue of *World's Work* entitled "Gathering Clouds Along the Color Line," which concluded, with marked trepidation: "No one who is at all familiar with the conditions which confront the American Negroes at the present time can doubt that discontent and unrest among

them have been spreading, particularly within the last two years."

But Wilson was elected again by a united front that included Henry Ford and the *New Republic*. No sooner had he been safely returned to the White House than the *New Republic* editors made clear that the powers-that-be would take no nonsense from Negroes who found their appointed "place" uncomfortable. The magazine on November 18, 1916, ran an article by one Harrison Rhodes entitled, with the editors' typical concern for clarity, "Notes from Laodicia on the Negro Problem," which ended as follows:

Now in these troubled days of the twentieth century, clouded horizons and the social revolution like a mirage before us, we may still love humanity while we deny its freedom and only hope for its equality in some future day. Is it not possible, in the interests both of black man and of white, to leave unsettled the question of the black's equality and his destiny, and meanwhile to appreciate his suave good-natured contribution to our national tone? And not to become too enthusiastic about not giving him a chance?

When war was declared, enthusiastic promises were made the Negro people. Samuel Gompers swore that "emancipation from every vestige of wrong and injustice" would follow the holy crusade against kaiserism. Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels let himself go: "In this war we are establishing a new spirit of universal equality and brotherhood. Too long has America been enslaved, too long has caste been enthroned. Kings will be relics, thrones will be in museums, here and abroad." The chief himself, Mr. Wilson, told the Black people: "With thousands of your sons in the camps and in France, out of this conflict you must expect nothing less than the enjoyment of full citizenship rights—the same as are enjoyed by every other citizen."

How tender and benign were the newspapers—the very sheets which had never before noticed the Afro-American except to slander him. The *New York Sun* was certain that Negroes would “give a magnificent account of themselves in France. They may not be able to live amicably with Southern communities, but they know how to die in defense of the flag.” Wherefore, Mr. Morgan’s personal journal urged that the Black soldiers be shipped abroad with as little delay—and as little preparation—as possible. The *Lexington (Ky.) Times* bade a “heartfelt farewell” to the Black men who, in common with their white fellow citizens, were “rallying to the defense of our institutions.” Irving S. Cobb visited Negro troops, found them “wonderful,” and concluded—in the *Saturday Evening Post*—“Yes, most assuredly n-i-g-g-e-r is going to have a different meaning when this war ends.”

The respectable “leaders” of the Negro masses were ordered to perform their function of deception. Said the *Salisbury (N.C.) Evening Post*: “Plans are now under way to give these men a sendoff, a farewell that will be made appropriate by the leaders of the race in this city who send these men as their representatives to fight for America as becomes good Americans.” The War Department issued special instructions, “for general information, not for publication,” advising how best to engage the active cooperation of the “solid” citizens among the Black people. Emmett J. Scott, private secretary to the late Booker T. Washington, was appointed special assistant to the Secretary of War to “look after” the darker tenth of the population.

As one of these eminently “solid” citizens, Robert R. Moton—whose solidity earned him the title of major—put it: “The educated Negroes, professional and business men, and educators generally . . . not only counseled their people to be loyal, but urged them to avoid loose

expressions even in jest which might lead others to misunderstand.” Said the honorable Dr. Scott, from behind his Washington desk: “This is not the time to discuss race problems. Our first duty is to fight, and to continue to fight until this war is won. Then we can adjust the problems that remain in the life of the colored man.”

Evidence indicates, however, that notwithstanding the advice and promises of these eminent individuals, the infancy of the Black mass organizations, and the weakness and disunity among radical groups, there was considerable opposition to the war. Such opposition, whether from white or Negro, was not news “fit to print,” so one rarely gets past the censorship to the seething unrest. But the casual references and occasional hints are revealing.

Early in April 1917, the month war was declared, Negroes were arrested “upon the charge of rebellion and treason” in Columbia, Tennessee, and Birmingham, Alabama. In West Point, Georgia, a Dr. H. Pannkoke, described as “a German,” was arrested for denouncing the war before assemblies of Negroes. The danger arose, as the town’s mayor acknowledged, from the fact that “Pannkoke was having some success to arousing the Negroes.”

The *Macon (Ga.) Telegraph* feared these so-called “German plots” might succeed “among that small percentage of Southern Negroes who, poisoned by too much exploitation by well-meaning philanthropists in the North and East, have come to feel that the Negro’s destiny in the South is best to be served by the overthrow in some fashion or other of peculiarly Southern institutions.” The *Telegraph* thought there were “enough of them lending a willing ear to call for prompt and severe treatment.”

This treatment, of course, was to be meted out to the

Black for his own good—it was all part of the idealism of the war for freedom. Said the *Chicago Tribune*: "Our observation goes to show that the Negro is happiest when the white race asserts its superiority. . . . Southerners insist that 'the nigger must be kept down.' They enforce the color line." At any rate, said the *New Republic* (October 21, 1917): "The Negroes of the South, we may well believe, are better off than they would be in a black republic." The editors well understood, to use their own language, that "the assembling of large numbers of lusty young blacks" incident to the war effort "quite naturally gives occasion for concern."

Even President Wilson deigned to comment on the situation. In a letter written April 19, 1917, he professed amazement that "many of the members of the colored race were not enthusiastic in their support of the Government in this crisis." He saw to it that one Black man who showed a marked lack of enthusiasm and whose speeches denouncing the warmakers were gaining increasing sympathy was imprisoned and silenced. Ben Fletcher, a Black official of the Industrial Workers of the World, was sent in 1918 to Leavenworth for ten years.

Three days after Wilson asked Congress to declare war, William G. Willcox, president of the New York City Board of Education and chairman of the Board of Trustees of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, was dispatched to the South as a "friend" of the Black people in order to bolster their morale. He declared his certainty that they would gladly "prove their right to stand shoulder to shoulder with their white brothers in answer to their country's call, and, if the supreme test must come, prove that their blood is as red, their hearts as true, their courage as steadfast to do and die in its service."

A day later a reporter for the *New York Times* interviewed Dr. Hollis B. Frissell, principal of Hampton Institute in Virginia, and asked his opinion concerning reports that Blacks resented the fact that their citizenship

was remembered only when there was dying to be done. The good doctor pooh-poohed the reports, but admitted he was "interested to read some statements that indicate there are a large number of Negroes who are disloyal to the Government." The interest grew to the point where on April 12 Dr. Frissell thought it necessary, according to the headlines, to "Call Negroes to Duty" and to assure them that "the colored man is going to secure recognition, not by demanding his rights, but by deserving them."

As noted, Woodrow Wilson had assured the Black people upon America's entry into the war that they might "expect nothing less than the enjoyment of full citizenship rights—the same as are enjoyed by every other citizen." This certainly would be a logical expectation, assuming the sincerity of Wilson's words about fighting for democracy and the right of self-determination, and Josephus Daniels' about fighting against caste segregation, tyranny, and injustice. Nothing was wrong but the assumption.

There was no clearer demonstration of the falsity of that assumption than the manner in which the government dealt with the most oppressed segment of its citizenry. This treatment was not fortuitous, it was not extraneous from or foreign to the entire content of the war effort. It did not represent a mere oversight or neglect or aberration. It was the deliberate and inevitable result of the imperialist content of the American government and its foreign policy.

In the ruling class "way of life," the policy is that the Black shall get far less than his proportionate share except when it comes to forming battalions of death. Thirteen percent of the U.S. Army in World War I was Black, although Negroes constituted 10 percent of the total population. Seventy-five percent of the Blacks examined for military service were accepted, as compared with 70 percent of the whites. Again, 27 percent of the

white registrants under the draft act were enrolled for full military service, while this "honor" was conferred upon 32 percent of the Blacks.

This "favoritism" was particularly rampant in the South, and in at least one case was so outrageous that even the War Department felt it necessary to dismiss an entire draft board. This occurred in Fulton County, Georgia, where it was discovered that out of 815 white registrants, 526 were exempted, while out of 202 Blacks, only 6 were considered unfit.

Another interesting Southern racket was the "deserter"-catching game, the prize being the fifty dollars the government offered for every apprehended "deserter." Negroes were not permitted to volunteer in the South. And it became common for draft boards to refrain from sending Blacks notices of their call and then to arrest them as "deserters," forward them to Uncle Sam, and collect the reward.

Three hundred and eighty thousand Black men were mobilized for full military service and two hundred thousand sent to France. Of the latter, forty-two thousand served as combat troops, the remainder as laborers, *i.e.*, those who built and repaired roads, unloaded ships, dug trenches, cooked food, and buried corpses. These duties were performed under specially chosen white officers who were supposed to "know how to handle" Blacks.

Black women who offered to serve as nurses were not wanted. Black men could get no food and no cigarettes in buildings that housed the Young Men's Christian Association. Clothing cartons for Negro soldiers were labeled for "current colored draft" and consisted of secondhand shoes and secondhand suits. Blacks in Camp McLellan, Alabama, wore nothing but fatigue shirts, for their underwear and overcoats and uniforms and shoes arrived months after they did. Drilling consisted of

"marching to and from work with hoes, shovels, and picks." Influenza was rampant, tents old, mess halls indecent, toilets filthy. Even the Executive Committee of the General Wartime Commission of the Churches said conditions were so bad as to "make it more difficult to sustain among the colored people as a whole an adequate recognition of our democratic ideals in the war and the largest devotion to our cause."

After the 24th Colored Infantry had been transferred to a Southern post, it was disarmed even when on patrol duty, insulted, jim crowed, some of its members beaten by local policemen. Lynchings kept recurring (forty-four were reported in 1917) and one took place in May at Waco, Texas, when Jesse Washington was burned alive in the public square. From July 1 to 3 a headline-crazed mob, which included many white soldiers and sailors, let all hell loose in East St. Louis, destroying three hundred Negro homes and murdering 125 Black men, women, and children. In August a Houston policeman beat up another colored soldier. When the rumor reached the Black infantrymen that a lynch mob was forming, they armed themselves and on August 23 marched into the city and fought back. Two Blacks and seventeen whites, including five policemen, were killed. Ninety-nine Blacks were sentenced to prison for terms ranging from a few years to life (the last of them was pardoned in 1938); thirteen were hanged.

The Blacks sent abroad fought so well that it proved embarrassing. Four entire Negro infantry regiments—the 369th, 370th, 371st, and 372nd—and the first battalion of the 367th were awarded the Croix de Guerre. The first American soldiers to be decorated for bravery under fire by the French were two Black privates, Henry Johnson and Needham Roberts.

This would never do. A deliberate campaign of slander was begun. Contradictory orders were given four Black

officers of the 368th Infantry regiment and when they attempted to do the impossible—without maps, artillery support, grenades—they were relieved of their commands amid great fanfare. A court-martial later exonerated them, but their vindication did not receive a tenth of the publicity accorded their disgrace.

Two American generals, Ervin and Horn, issued humiliating orders, the former forbidding Negro soldiers to associate with French women, the latter ordering them not to attend general social functions. This last order was matched in the United States by General Ballou's command to Black troops to keep away from places where "they were not wanted." On August 7, 1918, a circular called "Secret Information Concerning Black American Troops" was issued from the headquarters of General Pershing himself. It informed the French people and army that the Negro was really an "inferior" being, that familiarity or comradeship with him on the part of the white people was resented by the Americans, and that such actions would create serious complications for the government of the United States. A broad hint was also dropped that a little less notice of the gallantry and bravery of the Black troops on the part of the French officers would be appreciated by the American Army Command. Though 1,300 of the crosses, row on row in Flanders Field, mark the graves of Afro-American soldiers, those who survived were not permitted to take part in the great Paris Victory Parade of the "democratic" allies on Bastille Day, July 14, 1919.

At home, mass butcheries of Blacks stimulated by a corrupt press and motion picture industry (*The Birth of a Nation* was featured during the war years) occurred in other places than East St. Louis—in Youngstown, Ohio, and Chester, Pennsylvania, for example. Reported lynchings jumped to sixty-four in 1919. And under the federal government's edict of "Work or fight," forced labor for

Negro men and women spread throughout the South.

That edict directed all men up to the age of forty-five either to engage in productive labor or join the army. Southern states expanded this enactment, applying it with special ferocity against Blacks. Louisiana and Kentucky raised the age limit to fifty-five and Georgia to sixty. Certain localities applied the measure to women as well as to men. Wrightsville, Georgia, for example, decreed the arrest, on a vagrancy charge, of anyone within its borders from sixteen to fifty who did not have a card signed by his or her employer certifying that the individual was "actively and assiduously engaged in useful employment fifty hours or more per week." In Bainbridge, Georgia, a city regulation specifically provided that *all Negro women*, single and married, were to get jobs or be fined fifteen dollars. A few women were arrested and fined but the law was defied by the Blacks who held a mass meeting in the summer of 1918 and warned city authorities that unless the act were repealed they would resist its enforcement "to the last drop of blood in their bodies." No further arrests were made.

In the rural areas peonage flourished, unrebuked by the federal authorities. The war years are the only period of the twentieth century in which prosecution of violators of the antipeonage laws is not so much as mentioned in the attorney general's reports.

In May 1918 a Negro in Brooks County, Georgia, assassinated one Hampton Smith, a particularly bestial operator of a peonage plantation. As a result, during the week of May 17–24, ten of the more militant Black workers were lynched in Brooks and Lowndes counties. When the wife, in the eighth month of pregnancy, of one of these men denounced the outrages and threatened to expose the identities of the lynchers, she too was murdered. She was stripped, hanged with her head down, and her abdomen was split open.

The discontent of the Black masses reached fever pitch. Their established organizations grew with great rapidity. In December 1917 the NAACP had 80 branches and nine thousand two hundred members; the next year it had 165 branches and forty-five thousand members, twelve thousand of whom were in the South. Its journal, *The Crisis*, edited by Dr. Du Bois, sold an average of 41,289 copies each month in 1917, and 74,187 in 1918. Other and more militant organs came to the fore, such as the *Guardian* in Boston, the *Defender* in Chicago, and the *Messenger* and *Crusader* in New York. New organizations, short-lived but significant, appeared—the National Liberty Congress of Colored Americans, the African Blood Brotherhood (which later affiliated itself with the Workers' Party of America), and the National Brotherhood Workers of America. The last-named fought for unionism and against lynching, jim crow, and peonage. Its Washington convention in September 1919 hailed the Soviet Union as a beacon light for the workers of the entire world.

Black membership in the Industrial Workers of the World grew during the war years. Black workers also intensified their efforts to break down discrimination within the AFL. Two anti-jim crow resolutions were presented at the 1917 AFL convention and six in each of the next two annual conventions. Typical was one put forward in 1918 by Black railroad workers in the state of Washington asking that they be organized since "in the past . . . a lack of realization on the part of the organized white laborers that to keep the unorganized colored laborers out of the field of organization has only made it possible for the unscrupulous employer to exploit one against the other to the mutual disadvantage of each." The bureaucrats at the convention killed the proposals, but they were indicative of the maturing class consciousness of the newly proletarianized Negro laborers.

The powers that be were duly informed of the brewing danger. Major Moton, on June 15, 1918, warned Wilson: "There is more genuine restlessness, and perhaps dissatisfaction, on the part of the colored people than I have ever known before. I have just recently returned from trips to Alabama, Georgia, North and South Carolina. It seems to me something ought to be done to change the attitude of these millions of black people." On July 1, 1918, War Secretary Baker called the same situation to the President's attention and remarked that, although he had uniformly denied reports of unfair treatment, "there was still much unrest" among the Blacks. Both Moton and Baker urged Wilson to say something, if but a word, condemning lynching. His private secretary, Mr. Tumulty, and America's chief purveyor of misinformation, Mr. Creel, begged their chief to take the same action. More important than this prompting were the petitions, delegations (rarely permitted to see Mr. Wilson), and mass demonstrations. Tens of thousands of Negroes silently paraded in cities throughout the country. Finally, on July 26, 1918, Wilson was persuaded to issue a statement against lynching. He did nothing, however, to expedite the passage of two antilynching bills in Congress. They were never so much as reported out of committee.

At the close of hostilities Wilson sent Major Moton to France to prepare the Afro-American troops for their return to the domestic way of life, since it was feared their months away from its influence might have "spoiled" them. They came home to be jim crowed by the American Legion, to meet a revived Ku Klux Klan, to see seventy-seven Blacks lynched (eleven of them soldiers) in 1919, and to witness outbreaks against Black people in twenty-nine cities during the same year, resulting in the deaths of at least one hundred Black men and women. The most serious outbreaks occurred in Chicago, Wash-

ington, D.C., and Elaine, Arkansas. In Washington the city police generally sided with the rioters, who finally were dispersed by the militant, organized resistance of the Blacks themselves. Because the Negroes of Elaine had formed a union and hired lawyers in an attempt to fight peonage, they were attacked by armed planters. Five whites and scores of Blacks were killed; later eleven Blacks were convicted and electrocuted by the state of Arkansas on charges of insurrection.

Today* the forces of labor, of the oppressed, and of the colored peoples of the world are infinitely stronger than they were a generation ago. The historic role of the Black people in America has from the earliest days been to announce and fight for the most advanced demands of the people as a whole. Their position as America's most exploited people has made them the surest touchstone of American democracy.

*This was published in *New Masses*, April 21, 1941, but the words need not be altered.

«XI»

The Black College Student in the 1920s—Years of Preparation and Protest

As was noted in the Introduction to this book, the 1920s was a decade featured by a remarkable flowering of creative writing from Afro-American people; it was, indeed, the era of the "Harlem Renaissance."¹

The decade was marked, too, by nonfiction writing, in both essay and book form, by Carter G. Woodson, A. A. Taylor, Benjamin Brawley, Alain Locke, Rayford Logan, Horace Mann Bond, Abram Harris, E. Franklin Frazier, Charles S. Johnson, Mary Church Terrell, and Kelly Miller. These people differed among themselves but in one respect they were alike—none was tradition-bound.

In other respects as well the decade was remarkable for its productivity. Handy's Blues appeared in 1926; and in their glory were Paul Robeson, Josephine Baker, Louis Armstrong, Florence Mills, Roland Hayes, Bessie Smith, Charles Gilpin, Richard B. Harrison, and Ethel Waters. In this decade, for the first time, major houses—Harper, Macmillan, Harcourt, Brace, Boni & Liveright, Viking, Knopf—were publishing Negro writers, as were nationally circulating magazines such as the *American Mercury*, *The Nation*, the *South Atlantic Quarterly* and *Foreign Affairs*. Books appeared by white writers, relative to aspects of the so-called Negro question, which showed some competence, such as those by Franz Boas, Melville J. Herskovits, William H. Skaggs, and Frank Tan-

nenbaum. Something approaching and even reaching genuine friendship appeared among white and Black authors and artists, the whites among them being Michael Gold, Hugo Gellert, Carl Van Vechten, Henry Mencken, Waldo Frank, Eugene O'Neill, V. F. Calverton, Ridgely Torrence, Dorothy Canfield (Fisher), and Sherwood Anderson. Entire issues of significant magazines were devoted at times to the thought and life of Black people. Examples include the famous issue of the *Survey Graphic*, published in March 1925—which became the basis for Alain Locke's influential anthology, *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (first issued in December 1925, with a second printing required by March 1927)—and three times by the splendid radical journal (which merits a study in itself) *The World Tomorrow* (March 1922, May 1923, and April 1926).

Of special consequence for the Afro-American of the 1920s were the self-determination slogans of Wilson and the analogous concepts and actions associated with the Bolshevik Revolution. A new seriousness in the approach toward socialism and radicalism appeared in the Negro press—not only in frankly radical journals such as the *Challenge* and the *Messenger* but in journals such as *The Crisis* and in newspapers such as the *Amsterdam News*. Nationalism's heights were reflected in the Garvey movement.

The experiences of the war were decisive, of course, for all who felt them; their impact, however, upon Black Americans both abroad and here—with the distinction between words and deeds most glaring—cannot be exaggerated. The repressions associated with this—East St. Louis, Chicago, Washington, Elaine, Arkansas—and the militancy with which such repression was met captured the attention of millions. Migration northward and urbanward during and just after the war is well known; perhaps less well known is the devastating impact of the

postwar depression upon Black masses and especially the chronic agricultural crisis which only deepened with the disaster of the 1930s. The depression of the 1930s had come to certain basic industries in the South—textiles, coal mining, railroads—by the latter half of the 1920s.

While the 1920s witnessed the positive developments in scholarly, publishing, and intellectual circles already noted, racism still dominated those circles (it is the time of U. B. Phillips on the one hand and Octavus Roy Cohen and *The Birth of a Nation* on the other); in the country as a whole the Twenties witnessed the resurgence of the Klan and the passage by Congress of explicitly racist restrictions upon immigration.

Only within this context can one begin to understand the momentous developments in higher education in the United States as a whole in the Twenties, and most particularly among the Black people.

The great leap in higher education—certainly in a quantitative sense—occurred in the 1920s: enrollments in colleges and normal schools totalled 355,215 in 1910, 597,682 in 1920, and 1,188,532 in 1930 (the depression reducing the total in 1935 to 1,155,000). The number of students registered in institutions of higher learning increased by about fifty thousand each year during the 1920s. Feeding this was the transformation in the high school system; it is the Twenties which *begin* the universalization of such education. But while in this decade the general enrollment in colleges doubled, among Negro youth it quintupled: in 1920 a total of 396 Black youths received bachelor's degrees (118 in Northern colleges); in 1925 the total reached 832 (224); and by the end of 1929 the figures stood at 1,903 (374). This means that the graduates from Negro colleges increased sixfold in ten years, and Black graduates from Northern colleges had increased three times.²

Prior to World War I there were almost no high schools

for Negro youngsters in the South; in 1924-1925 in eighteen Southern states (including West Virginia and the District of Columbia) the total of public and private high schools open to Blacks was 166 (with 1,006 graduates); the next year the number of schools was 205 (4,750 graduates); and as late as 1926-1927 there were only 251 high schools open to Blacks through these eighteen states, with graduates totalling 4,910. Georgia had a total of only 12 high schools altogether—for *all* youngsters—in 1905; by 1928 the number came to 260, but as late as 1930 the entire state had only 47 high schools for Blacks.³

As one might expect from the data offered and the background presented, the decade was one of considerable uneasiness for college and university authorities in general. By the spring of 1924 a student publication mentioned student strikes of the recent past as having rocked campuses at Brown, Temple, Amherst, and the University of Tennessee.⁴

Contemporary works dealing with colleges—and all ignoring Negro colleges and students (some still do, of course)⁵—also reveal certain common complaints and problems. Christian Gauss, Dean of the College of Princeton University, in *Life in College* (New York, 1930) commented: "At certain times, however—and the present is such a time—there are heard upon the different campuses throughout the country the same protests. Common slogans spring up. . . . Such a slogan just now is: 'Treat us like men.' This is the form taken by any protest against restraints—against all rules and regulations." "I do not recall," Dean Gauss added, "having heard this protest before 1918." Certainly that same slogan, with its specially poignant meaning when uttered by Black youth, rang out at many campuses in the 1920s.

Dean Gauss went on to make another point not left unmade by presidents of Negro institutions—as President McKenzie of Fisk:

This problem in the colleges is quite similar to that occasionally presented, of recent years, by radicals everywhere. Shall the factory be turned over to the workers and be run by the workingmen's council? Shall the colleges be turned over to the students and be run by undergraduate committees?

These were considered rhetorical questions by the dean in 1930. The reply which he offered to all such slogans and notions also was certainly that which dominated the Negro institutions. "State universities and endowed colleges," stated the dean with obvious assurance, "are charitable institutions founded for the deliberate purpose of giving away education" (pp. 111, 113).

The behavior expected by administrators of such institutions from the charity cases may be imagined; but typical college bulletins made copiously explicit these expectations. They were enforced, when necessary, by appropriate court action. The classical decisions were those rendered by the Supreme Court of Kentucky in 1913 (*Gott v. Berea College*) and by an Appellate Court of New York in 1928 (*Anthony v. Syracuse University*). In the 1913 decision the court said: "College authorities stand *in loco parentis* concerning the physical and moral welfare, and mental training of pupils, and we are unable to see why, to that end, they may not make any rules or regulations for the government or betterment of the pupils that a parent could for the same purpose." In the 1928 decision the court held: "The university reserves the right and the student concedes to the university the right to require the withdrawal of any student at any time for any reason deemed sufficient to it, and no reason for requiring such withdrawal need be given." In the instant case the actual reason for dismissal offered by the university was that the offending young woman was not "a typical Syracuse girl!"⁶

The McKenzie administration of Fisk University, defending its stringent rules and regulations and its expulsion of leaders of the student demonstration of February 1925, published extracts from similar regulations enforced by neighboring (white) institutions, and quoted at some length from the rules of Vanderbilt University—also in Nashville—the concluding sentence of which stated: “The government of this institution would be ashamed of any who would excuse breaches of morality and decorum on the plea that the acts in question were not specifically condemned in a code of law.”⁷ This would seem to leave room for the expulsion of any culprit found not to be a typical Vanderbilt boy.

Students at Negro colleges in the 1920s found themselves not in the hands of institutions which considered them and were considered by others as *in loco parentis* but rather in the place of step-parents! If the dean at Princeton frankly affirmed his view that higher education was charitable work, he assumed the recipients were of the same color (and religion) as the philanthropists; in the case of Negro institutions the reality was the reverse. In the latter case both the philanthropists and the top administrators, predominantly white, retained all the racist notions characteristic of the nation.

To many parents of Black college students of the 1920s, the very opportunity of attending college—under almost any condition—was so welcome, so urgently desired, and so laboriously achieved that to protest conditions, not to speak of risking expulsion, seemed so outrageous as to border on the sacrilegious. This feeling was reinforced by the fact that if the college were not directly connected with a church—and most were—it was almost certain that the president was a minister. These factors and others akin to them induced some parents, at the time of the 1927 student uprising at Hampton, in the words of Du Bois, to “turn upon their

own children like wild beasts, ready to beat them into submission.”⁸ All this makes more noteworthy the fact that many parents of the increasingly restless Black college youth of the 1920s rallied to their support. It illuminates also the depths of discontent felt by the students that, given these circumstances, they nevertheless openly displayed it, so often and in such large numbers.

It is not surprising, then, that in the Negro colleges the typical atmosphere produced what Claude McKay, speaking of Tuskegee, called “the semi-military, machine-like existence.”⁹ Toward the end of this period, John P. Davis went so far as to denounce what he called the “fascism of Talladega” and “the eternal catering to southern white sentiment” that, he wrote, characterized the Negro institutions.¹⁰ Earlier, G. David Houston, writing on “Weaknesses of the Negro College,” said that typically it “is more of a medieval monastery than a modern progressive institution of academic freedom and initiative.”¹¹ In the middle of the decade Du Bois warned that “it has gradually become a recognized rule of philanthropy that no Negro higher school can survive unless it pleases the white South”; and that “the South still wants these schools to train servants and docile cheap labor.” When, early in 1926, it was announced that Hampton and Tuskegee had new endowments amounting to five million dollars, Du Bois urged upon their administrators that now they might “stop running your schools as if they were primarily for the benefit of Southern whites and not for blacks.” He urged that the heavily endowed administrators

Say frankly to all comers . . . this school is not a sanatorium for white teachers or a restaurant and concert hall for white trustees and their friends. Those who wish to visit us are more than welcome but they must expect to be treated as we treat ourselves. Our aim is to make Negroes men—nothing less.

Those who do not agree with us though they be old teachers, "best friends" of the Negro or what not, must stand aside. We are going ahead to full-fledged colleges of A grade and no longer to pretend that we are simply educating farm hands and servants.¹²

Partially due to such pressures from the young people themselves, and the needs of a growingly urbanized and industrialized Black population, significant changes were occurring in the Negro colleges in the 1920s. Du Bois, in studies issued by Atlanta University Press both in 1900 and in 1910, had indicated how much needed to be done to make these colleges genuine institutions of higher learning. Another such study—very much more elaborate and less sympathetic—was made by Jesse T. Jones in 1916 and published in two volumes by the U.S. government the next year. The latter declared that of the scores of schools with the title "college" or "university," only three—Fisk, Howard, and Meharry Medical College—really merited the title.

Commencing, however, in 1920 such schools as Hampton added significantly to their college-level work and their humanistic rather than vocational studies. By 1921 Atlanta began graduate-level work; by 1928 the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of Southern States recommended the consideration of Negro institutions. And in the final year of this momentous decade, Morehouse, Spelman, and Atlanta combined under its first Negro president, John Hope, to form the Atlanta University System.¹³ These responses and changes, though not in themselves inconsequential, were not nearly enough to meet the new mood among the Black generation which came of age in the postwar decade. Of that new mood something more needs to be said.

Benjamin Brawley in his first-rate and now sadly

neglected book, *A Social History of the American Negro* (New York, 1921), entitled an excellent chapter "The Negro in the New Age." He saw the war and its aftermath as this New Age, and placed the oppressed condition of the Afro-American within the context of colonialism in general. He sensed its decline in Africa and envisioned a contest that "appalls the imagination." Yet he was certain that "the exploiting that now goes on in the world cannot go on forever." As part of the world picture, Brawley saw in 1921 among his own people a "great spiritual uprising against the proscription, the defamation, and the violence of the preceding twenty years." He felt "a new determination closely akin to consecration possessed them"; as a result, he wrote, "The Negro now loves his own, cherishes his own, teaches his boy about black heroes, and honors and glorifies his own black women. . . . A whole race has been reborn; a whole race has found its soul."

Alain Locke, in his introduction to *The New Negro* (1925), hoped the volume would "register the transformations of the inner and outer life of the Negro in America that have so significantly taken place in the last few years." In a way nothing more graphically illustrates this transformation than a reading of the prefaces Woodson provided for the various editions of his *The Negro in Our History*, whose very appearance in 1922 and whose need for a fourth edition by early 1927 say much. The preface to the first edition is very brief and notes only that the volume seeks to show how U.S. history "has been influenced by the presence of the Negro in this country." The second edition carried no separate preface but the third, dated June 1924, did. Here Woodson added to his purpose that of treating segregation, "one of the most important topics," of showing how the Negro "is working out his salvation along economic lines" and "the

effort of the Negro to help himself by agitative methods."

The preface to the fourth edition, dated January 1927, has a tone and content altogether different from that of the first, written less than five years before.

Woodson stated that the fourth edition contained "four or five times as much about the Negro in Africa as appeared in the first three editions" and that, overall, the volume sought to see "the Negro as one of the advanced races of the world."

In specific terms, this 1927 edition of Woodson's work contained extensive and very critical comments upon the system of higher education for Negroes. By 1927 Woodson himself had tasted some of its vindictiveness both at Howard and at West Virginia. He especially criticized the fact of white domination of that system, the resulting chauvinism of its instruction, and its marked tendency to praise the status quo.

Capturing the mood, just as the decade was to commence, were two justly famous pieces of writing—one by Du Bois and the other by the young McKay. Both swept the Black world and were reprinted dozens of times, that by McKay in particular. Du Bois, in an editorial in *The Crisis* in 1919 (XVIII, 14), entitled "Returning Soldiers," declared:

Under similar circumstances we would fight again [an opinion he would live to change]. But, by the God of Heaven, we are cowards and jackasses if, now that the war is over, we do not marshal every ounce of our brain and brawn to fight a sterner, longer, more unbending battle against the forces of hell in our own land.

From McKay in 1919 came his great poem "If We Must Die," first published in the radical *Liberator* magazine for July 1919. Brawley, in the aforementioned book, had written, "Perhaps nothing, however, better summed up the new spirit than [that sonnet]"; Charles Johnson in his

contribution to Locke's *New Negro* quoted from it (as did William Domingo in his essay in the same volume) and remarked that it "caught the mood of the new Negro . . . and molded it into fiery verse which Negro newspapers copied and recopied."

It began, of course:

*If we must die, let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,*

and it closed:

*Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!*

Attention already has been called to the fact that the 1920s saw a marked increase in the number of Black students attending predominantly white institutions. This did not mean an absence of discrimination. On the contrary, such discrimination was marked at all U.S. universities (and high schools, it should be added)¹⁴ and other high-level institutions, from the Coleman Business College in Newark, New Jersey, to Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York. Among the colleges practicing discrimination—ranging from barring Blacks to less blatant practices—were, for example, Princeton, Vassar, Bryn Mawr, Harvard, Williams, University of Michigan, Johns Hopkins, Ohio University, and so on.¹⁵

Such practices, as well as the conditions prevalent in the Black institutions, were protested by Black students (and some white people, too) and formed the basis of individual actions, certain organizational responses, and the demonstrative actions which frequently reached strikes and/or what local papers called "riots." In the 1920s these actions appeared at least in the following Black institutions of higher learning: Livingstone College, Hampton Institute (three times—1923, 1927, 1928),

Fisk, Howard, Lincoln (Pa.), Shaw, Johnson C. Smith, Kittrell, St. Augustine, Knoxville, and Wilberforce.¹⁶

Before indicating something of the organizational activities relevant to college students in the 1920s, it will be appropriate to mention the names of just a few of the people making up this generation. They include E. Franklin Frazier, William L. Hansberry, Eslanda Goode, Rudolf Fisher, Earl B. Dickerson, Percy L. Julian, Sadie T. Mossell, Ruth Anne Fisher, Arthur H. Fauset, Bertram W. Doyle, Charles H. Houston, Sterling A. Brown, Harcourt A. Tynes, Aaron Douglas, W. A. Hunton, Raymond P. Alexander, Hubert T. Delany, Roy Wilkins, Benjamin Quarles, W. Allison Davis, Myles A. Paige, Horace M. Bond, Ira Reid, William Montague Cobb, Abram L. Harris, Charles Drew, Ralph Bunche, Gwendolyn Bennett, Jessie Fauset, Arna Bontemps, Langston Hughes, and Countee Cullen. This was not likely to be a silent generation.

The Black college fraternities and sororities had their years of founding or of significant growth in the 1920s. Very important among these was Alpha Phi Alpha, which in this decade instituted a nationwide "Go to High School—Go to College" movement. It sponsored meetings in school auditoriums, on campuses, and within churches and Ys throughout the nation. Not all the Greek letter societies were in colleges; in 1921 Negro high school students in Brooklyn, New York, organized Alpha Chi Sigma, dedicated to "the interest of higher scholarship." Its first secretary was William A. Hunton, Jr.¹⁷

The Crisis magazine for March 1926 (XXXII, 241), reported a meeting of the African Students' Union of America at Hampton; its president then was the Reverend Norman Wilson of New York City; its objects were described as "keeping alive the spirit of African students in the country, in discovering the best ways of making valuable contacts, and in interpreting African student

thinking to American students." The story added that this union had been organized in 1920, but this was an error. Actually, it was organized in June 1919 when, to quote its founding president, "a large number of all the native African students attending the colleges and universities of America gathered in the city of Chicago" and established it. This same individual explained its purposes in this way:¹⁸

There are many factors involved in the founding of this organization: namely, the unusual relations of Africa with the world as affected by the European war; the need of stimulating interest among ourselves by providing a means whereby we may be able to keep before us the importance of our duty to our country and the Creator; an effort to establish among ourselves a better condition of friendship, brotherhood, love and unity, so as to be able to do away with tribal hatred and jealousies existing in the homeland, having achieved our purpose in America; and lastly, all other foreign students in America have more or less formed such organizations with the same purpose in view, except the African students.

Early in 1922 the perhaps half-dozen Black students at Colgate University formed the Besmanbomara Literary Society; it met weekly, published a paper, and announced: "Its object is the production of deeper knowledge and appreciation of the achievements of the Negro in all the higher pursuits of life"; one was eligible to join provided there existed "sympathy with the objects of the society and affiliation by blood with the darker races."¹⁹

In January 1922 there was incorporated in Dayton, Ohio, the Aristos Society, whose purpose was "to affiliate organizations engaged in assisting [Black] students in their search for truth." The society had existed locally in 1916, but nationwide institutes were begun only in 1921 and thereafter held yearly.²⁰

In 1923 several relevant organizations appeared. These included the Douglass Society, made up of Black stu-

dents at City College in New York, the Student Progressive Club at Howard (which affiliated with the predominantly white National Student Forum, publishers of *The New Student* magazine), and the Inter-Collegiate Association. The latter had its headquarters in Harlem and announced these aims: "To encourage and promote sincere and efficient leadership in the field of Science, Art, Education, Politics, Religion, Finance and Commerce; to foster students' fellowship and aid in the adjustment of the student to the community; [and] to co-operate, if possible, with organizations whose aims are agreeable to the Inter-Collegiate Association." Among other activities this association presented public lectures by both white and Negro scholars, musicales, and plays.²¹

In 1923 the College Alumnae Club of Washington conceived the idea of a National Association of College Women; under the presidency of Lucy D. Slowe, dean of Women at Howard, this was formally established the next year. By the time of its Second Annual Convention held in Baltimore in April 1925, the association had branches in Washington, Baltimore, Wilmington, New York, Petersburg, St. Louis, Charleston, West Virginia, Portsmouth, Virginia, Cleveland, Kansas City, and Chicago. Its purposes were to improve conditions and raise standards in Negro colleges and, in particular, "to further education among Negro girls and women."²²

In the same year there appeared The League of Youth, which seems to have been made up only of Black college students. As of this moment its history is obscure to this writer. It did, however, hold a meeting in the summer of 1923 at Town Hall in New York City. The speaker of the evening was Countee Cullen—then of New York University and already well known as a poet. Among other things, Cullen said on this occasion:

Youth the world over is undergoing a spiritual and an intellectual awakening, is looking with new eyes at old customs and

institutions, and is finding for them interpretations which its parents passed over. . . . The young American Negro is going in strong for education; he realizes its potentialities for combating bigotry and blindness . . . the main point to be considered here is that it is working a powerful group effect. . . . Then the New Negro is changing somewhat in his attitude toward the Deity. . . . There is such a thing as working out one's own soul's salvation. And that is what the New Negro intends to do.²³

There is some reason to believe that this league became part of The American Federation of Negro Students, which certainly was functioning by 1923; Thomas L. Dabney of Virginia Union and Glenn C. Carrington of Howard were among the key officers in the organization.²⁴

This League of Youth may have been identical with what was called the Negro Youth Movement. J. Alpheus Butler, a Howard student, wrote early in 1923:

A group of Negro youth, representing several colleges and universities, have for some months been engaged in discussing a movement among their group which would be to a great extent concurrent with other youth movements. The leaders of this movement have for a number of years been doing independent thinking of their own.

The movement [Mr. Butler concluded] does not intend to draw the issue of revolt as that of *Youth versus Age*, but rather as that of *the Progressive versus the Stagnant, the Competent versus the Inefficient*. It seeks the fundamental weakness of the situation and proposes to work from the bottom up—a method which appears to be the reverse of that used by the present leaders. It seeks also to identify itself with the age in which it finds expression.²⁵

Information in this area is quite sparse and scattered. There are a few tantalizingly incomplete leads to the publication, early in the Twenties, of a paper called *College Dreamer*, by Black students at the University of

Illinois; and to the formation of a "Nile Club" among Negro students at Harvard during the same period.

There is some indication also, as in certain passages of letters from Abram L. Harris to Du Bois in the 1920s, that thought was given among younger Negro faculty members to the founding of a Black university of, by, and for the Black people with an orientation toward avowedly antiracist purposes. The idea even reached published form; it appears in an essay called "A Note on Negro Education," by the then very young E. Franklin Frazier.²⁶ He wrote: "Negro education in the past, to characterize it briefly, has been too much inspiration and too little information." He felt that "today Negro education faces a crisis" and urged: "His educational institutions can no longer be prizes in church politics or furnish berths for failures in other walks of life." Frazier demanded sound scholarship and the comprehension of scientific values; he rejected imitateness. He added:

Spiritual and intellectual emancipation of the Negro awaits the building of a Negro university, supported by Negroes and directed by Negro educators, who have imbibed the best that civilization can offer; where his savants can add to human knowledge and promulgate those values which are to inspire and motivate Negroes as a culture group.

The 1920s saw the appearance of rather significant interracial efforts on the part of college youth. Organizations having this in mind were established at the University of Michigan, the University of Chicago (headed by Benjamin E. Mays), and Barnard College of Columbia University; there were also important national student conferences of this nature.

Urgent questions facing us today were anticipated and even considered by the generation of the Twenties: separation versus integration; racism versus egalitarianism; education as charity and privilege and education as

a bulwark of the status quo and education as handmaiden of change; self-determination or paternalism; questions concerning student rights and power, faculty rights and power, academic freedom for faculty and students. Also, tactical questions as to strike or not to strike; moderation or militancy; acquiescence, dissent, or rejection. When the redoubtable Mrs. Mary Church Terrell urged, as she did in 1923, that "students in our universities and colleges can do much to eradicate prejudice by starting a crusade which shall have for its slogan—Down with discrimination against human beings on account of race, color, sex or creed,"²⁷ she was speaking to some who had already embarked on this long crusade. That some in our own day have lost their young lives in this effort and hundreds have willingly spent time in prison for the crime of joining the effort does not mean that others did not plow the ground earlier. Large in the process of first seeding stands the generation of the Twenties.

Let the last words of warning, analysis, and—perhaps—remedy come from Du Bois, the giant of them all. In his *Darkwater* (1921), the Doctor asked:

What, then, is this dark world thinking? It is thinking that as wild and awful as this shameful war was, *it is nothing to compare with that fight for freedom which black and brown and yellow men must and will make unless their oppression and humiliation and insult at the hands of the White World cease. The Dark World is going to submit just as long as it must and and not one moment longer* [italics in original].

In 1924 Du Bois told of a "tremendous and sometimes almost fanatic increase of race pride." And he warned that "white people do not sense this." The gap in comprehension and the persisting indignities may result in intensified hatred and even, he declared, in open war. "Of course," he continued, "it is impossible for twelve million men to fight a hundred million—but can they not hate the harder for their very impotence? Whether they

migrate, die or live, can they not add the red flame of their bitter hatred to all the mounting bill of deviltry which the dark world holds against the white? No—there's no hurry; it will not happen in our day. No. But it will happen." He warned that it was not too early to attend seriously and deeply to this question but he feared that the very "veil" created by the poisoned minds would prevent if not comprehension, then certainly action. "If they have seen all this," he asked, "what are they doing about it today and here, in America?" and he answered: "Nothing. Nothing. The damned fools do not even know what is going on!"²⁸

Finally, late in 1928, at an Interracial Conference held in Washington, Du Bois said that the question of the educability of Black people was no longer a matter of debate among intelligent people; nor was there any debate as to the fact of the criminal neglect of that education by a society inundated in racism. But, he said, the feeling still persisted "that the present problems of Negro education are problems of charity, good will, self-sacrifice and double taxation." Nonsense, said Du Bois—and with this certainly one will feel he is not in the 1920s but in the present—the problems are ones "which depend for their final solution upon political power." "Political power," Du Bois went on, over forty years ago, "is the beginning of all permanent reform and the only hope for maintaining gains."^{29*}

Surely, with this we are not only in today's world, but are reading tomorrow's newspaper!

*Since the original publication of this essay in *Science & Society*, Spring 1969, there has appeared the study by Edward K. Graham, "The Hampton Institute Strike of 1927," in *The American Scholar*, Autumn 1969, pp. 668-681. Professor Raymond Wolters, of the University of Delaware, is engaged in a full-length study of the strikes by Black college students in the 1920s.

This paper, in somewhat shortened form, was presented at the 53rd Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, in New York City on October 4, 1968.

Peonage and Antipeonage to World War II

As one of the results of four years of civil war and the loss of half a million men, the people of the United States were able to declare on December 18, 1865, in the Thirteenth Amendment to their fundamental law: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

In 1867 Congress enacted a law prohibiting forced employment, debt slavery, and, by name, the system of peonage. It provided penalties of a \$5,000 fine and imprisonment up to five years for such offenses. In 1911 the Supreme Court of the United States upheld the constitutionality of this antipeonage law and reaffirmed the illegality of involuntary servitude.

But there is a very wide margin between illegalization and abolition of an evil—between *saying* that something is wrong and *doing* something about wiping out that wrong. History demonstrates that the administration of the American government for the past seventy years, without exception, has been bold in speech and painfully shy in action so far as the abolition of forced labor is concerned. The fact is that at this very moment hundreds of thousands of American citizens are *forced to labor* for little or practically no wages, twelve to sixteen hours a day, six and one-half days a week; lashes, bullets, or the

chain gang await any who protest or are captured while attempting to escape.

Read the resolution adopted by the Georgia (white) Baptist Convention held in Augusta on November 11, 1939:

Peonage or debt slavery has by no means disappeared from our land. There are more white people affected by this diabolical practice than were slaveholders; there are more Negroes held by these debt slavers than were actually owned as slaves before the war between the states.

In 1860 there were over three hundred thousand slaveholders and over four million slaves in this nation.

Such conditions have existed for seven decades. In the very year (1867) of the passage of the federal Anti-Peonage Law, the *Montgomery (Ala.) Daily State Sentinel* of December 28 recorded the fact that "a system of peonage is inaugurated." From then right up to the present evidence of the widespread existence of this crime has appeared and reappeared.

The first conviction for the practice of peonage was obtained back in 1901 against John W. Pace of Alabama, who was later pardoned by Theodore Roosevelt. One year later three planters in Georgia were convicted, but Federal Judge Speer suspended their sentences "during good behavior." Such leniency in the punishment for this particular federal offense has been characteristic throughout the years. In 1927 the government secured twenty-one convictions of peonage against plantation proprietors, but the sentences for these criminals *totalled* only four and one-half years and \$4,000 in fines. The most recent conviction was obtained against P. D. Peach-er of Earle, Arkansas, in November 1936. The federal judge sentenced him to three years' imprisonment and a

fine of \$3,500, but suspended the penal sentence immediately on payment of the fine.

The annual reports of the United States attorney generals from 1907, when eighty-three complaints concerning peonage were received, to the present (with the significant exceptions of 1917-1919 when this country was too busy saving "democracy" for the world to bother about slavery at home) contain references to the existence of involuntary servitude. At times these reports declare that "this practice appears to be still quite extensively carried on" (1911) or "peonage was found to exist to a shocking extent" (1921).

Newspapers and magazines have also from time to time mentioned the existence of peonage. Most often this happens in periods of concerted protest on the part of the enslaved workers—as in Arkansas in 1919, in Mississippi and Alabama in 1931 and 1932, and in Arkansas and Alabama in 1935 and 1936. At other times some national calamity forces the ugly sore to the surface—such as the Florida hurricane of 1926, the Southern drought of 1930, and the Mississippi floods of 1927 and 1932.

In the fall of 1937 armed planters gathered to prevent cotton pickers from leaving Warren County, Georgia. Hoodlums were also hired by these slavedrivers to bring by force Negro workers—barbers, bootblacks, and garage attendants—from the nearby cities for work on the cotton fields. In November 1937 authorities of Louisiana herded together five thousand Negro WPA workers and forced them, under the surveillance of National Guardsmen, to labor on the sugar plantations. O. K. Armstrong has told of discovering in 1937 widespread forced labor in turpentine camps and on farms in Florida. He was commissioned to submit a report on these conditions by Governor Carlton, but when that politician was succeeded by Governor Cole the latter refused to act upon Armstrong's

findings. They now gather dust in the state archives of Florida.

James Wiggins, a Negro worker of Clarksdale, Mississippi, testified in January 1938 that he and his wife had been forced at gunpoint to work for one J. S. Decker. Upon attempting to escape and being caught, they were chained and offered for sale at \$175. In March 1938 an Alabama planter, T. J. Blair, was indicted on charges of operating a peonage farm but nothing further appears to have been done in the case. Ernest Meyer, in his *New York Post* column of March 12, 1938, told of a Negro woman, Mrs. Henrietta McGhee, an escaped peon from Arkansas, who bore marks of her servitude on her body. But nothing has been done to punish her enslavers.

A Federated Press dispatch of August 10, 1939, referred to peonage charges brought by three Negro women against Bruce Darby of Shreveport, Louisiana. The women had been beaten, lashed, and branded, yet nothing has been done about the gallant Mr. Darby. In November 1939 the *Yanceyville* (N.C.) *Caswell Messenger* carried the following advertisement, reminiscent of a fugitive slave advertisement of a hundred years ago: "NOTICE—I forbid anyone to hire or harbor Herman Miles, colored, during the year 1939. A. P. Dabbs, Route 1, Yanceyville." Said the *Evening Sun* of Baltimore, editorializing about this notice on December 6, 1939: "Probably it wouldn't be difficult to discover similar items of Americana in Mississippi and other regions of the Deep, or Low-Down South; but we're a bit chagrined to find it in North Carolina." The NAACP called this North Carolina item to the attention of the Federal Bureau of Investigation on December 9, 1939. They received no reply from a division of what is supposed to be the Department of Justice.

While Rebel yells were rending the air at the Atlanta

premiere of Margaret Mitchell's glorification of the old slavocracy in December 1939, two representatives of the modern slavocracy, Fed and Roy Reeves of Thomson, Georgia, were being tried for holding Robert Parker, a young Negro, in peonage. Roy Reeves admitted compelling Mr. Parker to labor for him without wages, forcibly recapturing him when he fled on July 26, and beating him the next day with a plow line "about thirty-five or forty times." Pictures of Robert Parker taken ten weeks later showed him to be still in a bad condition. Yet the Messrs. Reeves pleaded not guilty and declared that what they had done "was no more than anybody else there would do." The jury being "hopelessly divided" could not reach a verdict. A new trial was put off for six months.

The Washington office of the NAACP in April 1940 learned of another case of peonage from the lips of Claude B. Cistrunk, who escaped from Coleman and Kinch Watkins, operators of a sawmill in Mashulaville, Mississippi. Mr. Cistrunk received nothing but blows for fourteen months' labor at this mill, and has deposited a sworn statement to this effect with O. John Rogge, the assistant attorney general, at Washington.

The most flagrant and notorious case of debt slavery yet made public is connected with the plantations owned by the infamous William Tolliver Cunningham of Oglethorpe County, Georgia. This modern Simon Legree, who owns three large cotton plantations and enslaves scores of Negroes, operates his business in a manner that indicates a conscious attempt to reinstitute the slave system of a hundred years ago. Now, as then, the work-day extends from fourteen to seventeen hours, or, as one of the escaped peons expressed it to the writer, "from dark to dark." Food is, as it was, rationed out to the workers every two weeks. The father of a family of six children told me, on February 8, 1940, that their al-

lowance for the two-week period consisted of a twenty-four-pound sack of flour, a bushel of meal, and twelve pounds of meat. A man and wife alone received for the same period a twenty-four-pound sack of flour, half a bushel of meal, and six pounds of meat. *Nothing* else was given, with the result that the couple went hungry for three or four days out of the fourteen.

Protests or attempts at escape bring—as once they brought—curses, blows, lashes, beatings with clubs or pistol butts, and, in at least one case, shooting. Needless to say, wages are nonexistent.

The conditions in Oglethorpe County have been brought before the public as a result of the heroic and persistent, and frequently successful, efforts of the peons to escape. The Negro people have today, as they did over one hundred years ago, created an underground railroad, with terminals at Atlanta, Baltimore, Cincinnati, and Chicago. Relatives and friends of these Negroes have aided them with funds, shelter, and encouragement. And others have at considerable risk gone into Cunningham's bailiwick to aid the enslaved Americans.

It was at the suggestion of William Henry Huff, a Chicago Negro attorney, that the International Labor Defense established the Abolish Peonage Committee. That committee, formed in the finest traditions of the old Abolitionist organizations, is now in existence and will remain in existence, organizing and directing public opinion and offering aid to the modern slaves, until the system which has called them into being is destroyed.

In January 1940 Huff sent full details, in the form of numerous affidavits, of the practice of peonage and of the commission of other federal crimes by William T. Cunningham to the Department of Justice at Washington. On February 10, 1940, the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, J. Edgar Hoover, replied to Huff as follows:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter dated January 25, 1940, relative to conditions existing in Oglethorpe County, Ga.

I wish to advise the matter concerning which you wrote has been presented to Assistant Attorney General Rogge and he has advised that no further investigation should be made in the matter. The case, therefore, is being carried as closed in our files.

More sworn testimony detailing the facts in the matter were forwarded to the Department of Justice. This time Hoover's assistant, W. S. Devereaux, replied, on February 16, 1940:

Receipt is acknowledged of your communication dated Feb. 14, 1940, enclosing copies of affidavits concerning William Tolliver Cunningham.

Please be advised that these copies of affidavits are being made a part of the official files of this bureau.

I wish to advise that the matter concerning which you wrote has been presented to the Assistant Attorney General Rogge at Washington, D.C., and he has advised that no further investigation should be made of the matter. The case, therefore, is being carried as closed in our files.

It now became obvious to the committee that these servants of the people needed to be "advised" a little more vehemently. Had there existed no central organization it appears likely that Hoover would have succeeded in his evident wish to shelve investigation of this particular form of lawbreaking. But these rebuffs merely evoked greater action on the part of the committee. Pressure was exerted through the protests of the International Labor Defense, the National Negro Congress, the NAACP, the Protective Order of Elks, the National Baptist Convention, and the CIO Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America.*

*The late Congressman Vito Marcantonio of New York also actively participated in the antipeonage efforts.

The politicians, discovering with something of a shock that millions of voters were concerned about the enslavement of their fellow citizens, began to back water. Soon the committee learned that the assistant United States attorney general, Mr. Rogge, would be glad to grant its representatives an appointment. And so, during the entire day of March 25, 1940, Mr. Rogge listened to the demands for action made by J. Finley Wilson of the Elks, Charles Houston of the NAACP, John P. Davis of the National Negro Congress, William Henry Huff of the Abolish Peonage Committee, William Fleming and Otis Woods, two of the escaped peons, Louis Colman and William Patterson of the ILD, and William H. Hastie, dean of Howard University Law School.

The Department of Justice has decided, so it declares, to remove the affidavits from the files, get them into the hands of its investigators, and see that peonage conditions are thoroughly probed.

Mr. John P. Davis remarked, however, on behalf of the delegation:

We are not completely satisfied with the agreements made by Mr. Rogge, and it is our definite feeling that considerable and constant pressure will have to be brought to bear on the department in connection with these and similar cases before real, vigorous action will be taken that will result in federal prosecution of conditions approximating slavery which exist over a wide section of America.

Mr. Davis is unquestionably correct. In the words of another and an immortal Negro leader, Frederick Douglass:

If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing ground. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and never will.

ADDENDUM

As a relevant historical document we publish a letter received by the author from one of the escaped peons. It reached me early in 1940:

Dear Mr. Aptheker: I received your letter the other day asking me to write you of Wt Cunningham. . . . Not a one on the place could tell what they was getting for wages . . . by the day. Diden no what they was getting for hours because none did work by the hours. . . . Every two week 24 pound sack of flour and a bushel of meal 12 pound meat to my family. I had seven in family. I had the largest family . . . on the plantation. . . . A man and wife they got a 24 pound sack of flour and a half bushel of meal 6 pound of meat for two week. . . . We all would give out on Thursday and couldn't get any more because he wouldn't let the people have any more. No lard no sugar no coffee no snuff for the women. . . . He paid \$8 for me that why I was their but I never did no what I was getting for my work. Dinnes Thomas he married my wife mother. He escapes one Monday morning so Wt Cunningham sent John Paul and overtaken him. And John Paul overtaken Dinnes and bring him back and turn him over to Wt Cunningham with the handcuff on him. And Wt. Cunningham beat him over the head with his pistol and then bring him out on the plantation where I live to the house where he beat the Negroes at and made him pull off his clothes and laid down cross a sack of syrup cane seed and beat him with a bugger trace and let him up and told him to go home and change clothes. Because Dinnes could not walk fast he call Dinnes back in the house and beat him again and let him up. And Dinnes went home and change clothes and went to work. The clothes he pull off was bloody as they could be. So on Tuesday night I taken Dinnes and escapes and went to Atlanta. I taken him to the healing building before the men and they pull Dinnes clothes off. They were stuck to his back. You don't believe me you go to the healing building in Atlanta and you will fine Dinnes picture what they taken with his clothes off. My case is in Atlanta. I was sick one Monday morning

Cunningham came to my house and claim he was going to take me to the doctor. . . . Got up to the big house . . . he slap me and I had to go to work. I didn't count the hands he had in Lexington but it was 39 on the plantation I live on beside the children. . . . that work. I move their Wensday before the second Sunday in January 1938 and escapes in June. I work their five mounth my two girl work four mounth my wife mother work four mounth and my two girls got 50c a piece. After I left there my wife mother didn't get a penny. While she was there I went to Atlanta and prosecute Wt Cunningham and the G men sent a man out on the farm. . . . I want my case to be tried when Dock Wood and Otis Wood* is tried. I don't mean to tell anything but the truth all of my witness is in Atlanta and some in Chicago. What it take to brake up Oglethorpe is a prosecutor to . . . get on the stand and tell it . . . because I will die with the truth in my mouth. I am in bad condition now. Been snowing here. My people been down sick. . . . Lost my baby. Can't work. On Cunningham plantation the weomen stop at 11 oclock to go cook and bring it to the well. We couldn't go home and get dinner no days. Had to be in the lots three minutes after the bell ring. . . . A man didn't have no say so over his children.

Peonage, lynchings, and jim crow in general brought the United States a "bad press" internationally; protests at home also embarrassed the "New Deal" administration. With actual entry into World War II—against fascism and, presumably, the racism so characteristic of it—Roosevelt insisted on overt action against both lynching and peonage. The Department of Justice announced on December 16, 1941, that it intended to intensify its campaign against violations of the Thirteenth Amendment and that it would promptly investigate and prosecute all complaints concerning involuntary servitude.

A significant antipeonage decision was rendered by the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of *Taylor v. Georgia* on January 12, 1942, reiterating as valid the decision in the

case of *Bailey v. Alabama*, rendered back in 1911, but violated in fact with impunity for over thirty years. The Court's antipeonage decision in a case originating in Florida and decided in 1943—*Pollock v. Williams*—was even more clear-cut and sweeping and ended, so far as law and Courts could, the institution of peonage.*

*The author served as a secretary of the Abolish Peonage Committee and was involved in its activities for many months. In addition, see the *Monthly Bulletin* of the International Juridical Association (N.Y.), X (February 1942), 81. Helpful also is the dissertation of Pete Daniel on peonage being prepared at the University of Maryland; Mr. Daniel kindly provided the author with extracts therefrom.

*Originally published—except for the last two paragraphs—in *New Masses*, May 28, 1940.*

Literacy, the Afro-American, and World War II

Modern educational and social psychologists, interested in the question of the comparative intelligence of peoples varying in class status, cultural patterns, and ethnic origins, or combinations of these differences, have long dreamed of a particular type of experiment. This dream experiment would involve scores of thousands of subjects of all groups, classes, and backgrounds. These subjects would be carefully tested and sorted, and would all be about equally deficient in a common skill or aptitude. They would then be put through a learning process, not a mere test, and that process would be conducted by carefully selected teachers who would be provided with all the equipment they needed and desired. The motivation of all the subjects would be nurtured, and the rapport between teachers and learners would be good. The learning process would be continual for the period of the experiment, and it would not be broken by subjecting the examinees to other environments while it was conducted. The living conditions of the subject would be excellent and as uniform as could be established. Finally, having achieved these ideal conditions, the experiment would be climaxed by an objective test to discover whether or not the common deficiency had been eliminated.

Exigencies of World War II made possible the realization, in very large part, of this dream. To appreciate the

full significance of this, it is necessary that one understand the reality that called it forth.

Educational and social psychology has been and still is plagued by what is termed the nature-nurture controversy as concerns the comparative intelligence of peoples.* As the result of social needs there were developed in America and in Europe, starting some fifty years ago, so-called intelligence tests whose purpose was to provide a measuring rod of the learning capabilities (as deduced from past accomplishment) of individuals, for obvious uses in educational, vocational, and industrial fields.

Very soon after the formulation of these tests their function was distorted and vicious conclusions based upon this distortion were announced. The view was expounded that these tests did not demonstrate merely the level of learning capabilities attained under given conditions and as ascertained by specific questions; but rather that they were instruments measuring an innate, unchangeable quality of human beings—labelled intelligence. Therefore, when particular groups did poorly on these tests these results scientifically proved the innate inferiority of these groups. Using these tests uncritically, and applying them as indicated, one was able to assert that science had demonstrated the innate inferiority of the rural folk as compared to the urban, of the poor as compared to the rich, and of the Black (predominantly rural and poor, anyway) as compared to the white.

It did not matter to these mythologists masquerading as scientists that the pioneers in testing, the creators of the tests, had themselves denounced these interpretations. The greatest of these pioneers, the Frenchman Binet, had explicitly denounced¹ "some recent philoso-

*As is notorious, this is still (1969-1970) heatedly debated in "scientific" circles, not least the *Harvard Educational Review*.

phers" who supported "the deplorable verdict that the intelligence of an individual is a fixed quantity," and had himself experimentally increased scores made on his tests by the same individuals by changing conditions affecting them. An American pioneer in this field had been careful to point out² that the tests could have validity in terms of ascertaining native ability only "*when we compare individuals in a group who have had common experiences,*" and that "*Tests are valid only within a group who have had identical or very similar opportunities for gaining familiarity with the materials of the test, and who have not only the same opportunity to learn, but the same desire to learn.*"

These mythologists persist in promulgating their notions which, being attuned to and functioning as props for the socioeconomic status quo, retain a widespread popular acceptance,³ notwithstanding the series of devastating blows dealt them in recent years.

Let us summarize these blows. First, the median score of Blacks on intelligence tests is practically identical with (indeed, slightly higher than) that recorded for some white groups—as Portuguese, Italians, and Mexicans.⁴ Second, in several tests, where environmental conditions were approximately the same, the scores of Negroes matched, and at times surpassed, those made by whites.⁵ Third, where environmental conditions for Blacks may be assumed to be better than that for whites, the former scores have been higher than the latter.⁶ Fourth, studies have demonstrated, as a rule, that improving environmental conditions improve scores obtained in tests. This has been true, not only for Blacks, but for all other peoples. The cumulative effect of environment—good or bad—upon scores has also been demonstrated. Fifth, the intimate connection among such things as formal education, rapport, and motivation—in all of which Blacks are generally at a disadvantage—and scores obtained on

intelligence tests is established without any question.⁷

Even more important than all of the above—and that phase of reality which has been most decisively responsible for evoking the aforementioned dream—is the fact that the validity of the intelligence tests as scientific instruments for measuring any and all population groups has been seriously and successfully challenged.

Otto Klineberg has demonstrated the importance of cultural and environmental factors in accounting for differences in scores. Another has shown that one particular cultural distinction—that between urban and rural groups—is important and that, since the intelligence tests generally in use were standardized by using urban examples, it is to be expected that their results would favor urban folk. It has been demonstrated that a test standardized on rural individuals resulted in lower scores for urban examinees.⁸ The importance of this for the Black, so largely rural, is obvious.

Moreover, application of the tests now in use have uniformly resulted in lower scores for the poor and higher scores for the middle class and the rich. An essential reason for this, in addition to the data presented above, is that *the intelligence tests were standardized using white, urban, middle and upper class subjects.* Employing the tests as measures of some absolute quality labelled "intelligence" is not merely unfair, but absolutely invalid and unscientific. Such a procedure is analogous to using a linear standard to measure a liquid or speaking of a gallon of wood.

This is why a psychologist recently wrote, after surveying the literature on this question, "*that these tests cannot be used for measuring the capacity of different social levels within our own society . . . [and that] the mean difference in IQ found to exist between children of the lowest and highest status may be accounted for entirely in environmental terms.*"⁹

A final point bearing on the validity of the results obtained from these tests is the fact that these results are expressed in terms of a quotient (IQ) in which the mental score age is divided by a chronological score age. But this mathematical process presupposes that the two scores possess a constant relationship. This basic presupposition "in point of fact does not exist," as a leading psychologist has written.¹⁰

Thus we have a situation where mathematical figures derived from a nonexistent relationship, and based upon measuring instruments standardized upon particular sets of subjects, are used to describe levels allegedly attained by differing sets of subjects! And, to confound confusion, these levels are put forth as marking the innate intellectual capabilities of the individuals concerned, contrary to the avowed intent of the inventors of the instruments from which the levels were derived!

With this as the situation one can readily understand the origin of the dream delineated in the beginning of this chapter¹¹ and the crucial character of the results of the realization of that dream becomes readily apparent.

As has been remarked, the necessities of war accounted for this realization. In the *First Report* of the Director of Selective Service, he quite frankly remarked that he had believed, upon assuming his task, that he was dealing with a "literate America."¹² The result of this assumption was that the first regulations of Selective Service on literacy, promulgated in the winter of 1940, stated that those registrants "who passed the physical examination and could understand orders given in the English language" were acceptable.

What immediately followed disillusioned General Hershey as to the literate quality of large masses of the American population. It was found that in the two registrations prior to Pearl Harbor over three hundred forty-seven thousand men made marks on their cards

because they were unable to write their names; of these over one hundred twenty-five thousand were white and over two hundred twenty thousand were Black.¹³ As a consequence of the practical absence of literacy requirements for induction, about sixty thousand illiterate men entered the Army in the half year prior to the onset of war.¹⁴

These illiterates, thrust into the midst of desperate efforts to mold a modern war machine, were generally "useless to commanders,"¹⁵ and, though some feeble efforts were undertaken "to make them more literate," even these were largely abandoned for "under the circumstances of peacetime . . . the Army felt its facilities and personnel could be more profitably used."¹⁶

On May 14, 1941, the Army, by regulation, announced that no registrant possessing an education less than the fourth grade in an American elementary school was to be inducted. This, it was believed, "was certainly a low enough minimum."¹⁷ But facts and necessities were to prove the contrary. Within six weeks after the promulgation of this regulation about fifty-five thousand registrants were deferred because of it and by September 15, 1941, this number increased to over one hundred-forty thousand men, of whom about sixty thousand were white and the remainder Black.¹⁸

The situation was critical. During the three months from April through June 1942, it was found that of every thousand whites rejected, illiteracy, as defined by the regulation of May 1941, accounted for over 38, and of every thousand Blacks rejected, it accounted for 112. Moreover, figures compiled at about that time showed that of all men then registered, except those with dependent children, approximately three-quarters of a million (about a half-million white, a quarter-million Black), though physically fit, might be lost to the armed forces because of insufficient schooling.¹⁹ When it is remem-

bered that the United States at the conclusion of the war had put into the field no more than eighty-nine combat divisions (*i.e.*, about one million men) the meaning of this educational failing, in terms of the very life of the nation, becomes clear.

Remedial action was vital. Army regulations announced ²⁰ that, effective August 1, 1942, "any registrant who is able to understand simple orders in English and who possesses sufficient intelligence to absorb military training rapidly is eligible for induction into the military service." To prevent wholesale swamping, it was added that the number of men unable to read and write English in a fourth-grade standard accepted for induction on any one day at any station was not to exceed 10 percent of the white and 10 percent of the Black registrants.

Nevertheless, General McNary informed the Senate Committee on Military Affairs on October 14, 1942, that "the Army has inducted 135,000 illiterates."²¹ Thus the situation remained unsatisfactory.

On December 5, 1942, a Presidential Executive Order stopped all voluntary enlistments and placed upon the Selective Service Administration the responsibility of supplying men for the Navy. This, together with the impending decision of the Navy to accept Blacks, provoked a restudy of the entire problem of the induction of illiterates. The decision (taken February 1, 1943) was to revert to the fourth-grade educational test for induction into both services, but "the Army would now accept educationally deficient selectees not to exceed five percent of the total number of men accepted and assigned to the Army by color at each induction center on each day."²²

This makeshift for an intolerable condition lasted but four months and on June 1, 1943, both the Army and the Navy began to accept, with no limitation on percentage of illiterates, all registrants who passed certain intel-

ligence tests. This was no improvement in terms of solving the manpower problem. As might have been foreseen, under this arrangement the rate of rejection was even greater than before, particularly for Negroes. This was so because to the "educational and cultural background" that had accounted for the high rate of rejection under the illiteracy requirement were now added, since tests were given, the conditions under which this was done and "attitudes of the testers" plus the resulting "non-cooperative attitudes on the part of the registrants."²³ Indicative of the consequence is the fact that as of September 1, 1943, it has been estimated that over three hundred forty thousand men were placed in class IV-F because of educational deficiency.²⁴

The problem, resulting from generations of chronic and inexcusable social injustice, was insoluble in any immediate sense. Remedial action was possible and necessary, however, and this was introduced in earnest by the Army in June 1943. At that time special training units were created with the purpose of giving those illiterates who survived the so-called intelligence tests an intensive thirteen weeks' course (later reduced to from eight to twelve weeks) aimed at the specific task of raising them to a minimum literacy level equivalent to that obtained as the result of successfully completing the fourth grade in an "average" elementary school.²⁵

One had men from many walks of life; of all colors, creeds, and nationalities; from all sections of the country; from urban and rural backgrounds; identified only by a common intellectual failing—illiteracy. The theoretical value of the experiment in terms of the question of comparative intelligence is enhanced by the fact that these men were subjected not to a mere test of brief duration, but were to be put through a learning process of appreciable duration, the results of which had a relatively well-defined and objective base—namely, have the

subjects overcome their illiteracy to the indicated level? When it is remembered that fundamental to all definitions of intelligence is the idea of "ability to learn" or "ability to meet new situations quickly and successfully"²⁶ the significance of this effort becomes clearer.

The plan of the experiment was as follows:²⁷ Illiterates accepted for training in the Special Training Units were to receive psychological interviews and careful medical tests. They were then to be given placement tests designed to reveal their degree of functional literacy, as a result of which they were to be placed in classes of appropriate levels. In addition, periodic achievement tests were to be administered and men reassigned, if necessary, as a result of these findings, thus permitting them to advance as quickly as possible and assuring the homogeneous content (in terms of learning standards) to the classes.

The classes were to be small (not over about eighteen members was the desideratum) and the teachers were to be carefully selected for ability and eagerness. The content of the material presented to the students was to be alive and functionally useful and related to their own experiences, both past and present. Expense was not to be spared and physical facilities and training were to be excellent, practical, and helpful. Black teachers were to be employed extensively for Black students. Special attention was to be given to motivation and morale of the students. Not all the work was to be academic, but rather physical exercises and some military training were to be included. Of course the living conditions (food, clothing, medical service, and so on) of the subjects were to be the equal of the average domestic Army post.

This was the plan and, as in all plans made by and for human beings, there was no identity between the concept and the execution. It is certain that not all the teachers and administrators (company commanders) were of equal quality, and it is likely that some were poor.

Certain it is, too, that in different units there existed varying levels of motivation and morale, and that even physical conditions varied somewhat throughout the experiment.

It is likewise a fact that the plan itself envisaged no breaking away from the jim crow pattern of the Army. In the words of the Acting Deputy Director of Military Training of the Army Service Forces: "There were some Negro special training units as such. The majority of the units contained both Negroes and whites, who were organized into separate companies and instructed separately."²⁸ It is true, too, that while Black instructors were used in Black units, many Negro classes in general units were taught by white instructors, and the latter were not always entirely free of that bigotry which plagues our nation. Yet the plan was carried out substantially as envisaged and scores of thousands of Americans received, finally, a fraction of that education which is supposed to be their birthright.

Specifically, one is able to present these data: from June 1943 through October 1944 approximately one-hundred-eighty thousand men were placed in Army Special Training Units as functional illiterates. Of this number about one hundred-fifty thousand (85 percent) successfully completed their training and attained—or were said to have attained²⁹—a basic degree of literacy. Among the one hundred-fifty thousand men just mentioned, 86,670 were Negroes.³⁰

Of particular importance is the fact that of the whites who entered these units during the aforesaid period 84.2 percent successfully completed it, while 15.8 percent failed and were discharged from the Army. Of the Blacks who entered these units during the same period 87.1 percent successfully completed it, and 12.9 percent failed and were discharged. "In other words," as General Trudeau has stated, "experience in the Army indicates that a slightly higher percentage of the Negroes than the

whites successfully complete the Special Training Program, *i.e.*, achieve fourth-grade standards in reading, language, and arithmetic and demonstrate sufficient mastery of basic military subjects to warrant their being forwarded for regular training."³¹ It may further be remarked that no great difference between Black and white appeared in the speed with which this learning process was accomplished for, while 71.7 percent of the Blacks completed the training in less than sixty days, the comparable figure for the whites was 75.6 percent.

The conclusion is clear. The learning accomplishment of scores of thousands of Blacks from all sections of the country over an extended period of time compares quite favorably with that attained by scores of thousands of similarly diversified whites, in this greatest experiment of its kind ever conducted by the American government. The other striking characteristic of this experiment is the fact that the conditions to which Blacks and whites were subjected were fairly similar—certainly more nearly similar than are the conditions under which Blacks and whites live, work, and study in the conventional American civilian pattern.

These data not only constitute a shattering blow to racists, but present a challenge to their opponents to urge and to demand that the government do in peacetime what it felt had to be done and what it at least began to do in wartime—namely, conduct an all-out, scientific, and democratic assault upon the twin disgraces of illiteracy and educational inequality that remain as huge blights upon the lives of millions of its citizens.³²

«Published in *The Journal of Negro Education*, Fall 1946. At the request of the adjutant general, the U.S. Army reprinted this for distribution among its officers. A year later (1947), at the order of President Truman, the author's commission as a major in the Field Artillery was taken from him, as an alleged "subversive." One of the charges listed against him was that he "was known to have Negro friends." »

«XIV»

Integration Among Combat Troops in World War II

A particularly outstanding and unique event in the modern history of American Black-white relations occurred in the course of the war against fascism, but its results remain largely unpublicized. During the last two and a half months of the fighting, Black-white mixed combat infantry companies were widely employed in the European theater.

The winter of 1944–1945 witnessed considerable attrition in the number of American front-line troops facing the Germans. There were several causes, among which were the Ardennes counteroffensive of the Nazis and the bitter weather. These facts, taken together with the Supreme Command's determination to deliver an overall, crushing, final assault along the Western Front, led to the consideration of means of replenishing our forces.

One of these means, adopted as a last resort, was to tap the communications zone for personnel. We know now that by this time, January–February 1945, the war had but a short time to last. But up front there was no certainty of this. Hard fighting was in progress and, to put it mildly, it was rather unpleasant that winter on the line.

Yet when the call went out for volunteers, regardless of color, several thousand Black men offered their services. Of these, two thousand six hundred were accepted as having the necessary qualifications, given six weeks' intensive training under the officers and noncommis-

sioned officers who were to lead them in fighting. In March they began to kill Nazis. A point especially worth noting, though often overlooked, is that these men in volunteering to join front-line units relinquished any ratings they might have had and accepted the grade of private.

The Blacks were formed into a separate rifle platoon, officered by whites, and this platoon was superimposed on the normal company complement of one heavy weapons platoon plus three rifle platoons. One of these Negro platoons entered each of the three infantry regiments of a division. This was done within eleven infantry divisions—most notably in the 1st, 2nd, 9th, 69th, 78th, 99th, and 104th.

There are four basic questions that come to mind in connection with this. First, how did the receiving units feel about the Black reinforcements when they first arrived? Second, how did the Black troops conduct themselves while fighting alongside the whites in the same companies? Third, how did the men get along in the ultimate intimacy and comradeship of combat? Finally, did the white men of these units change their minds about the Negro after they had eaten, slept, bled, and killed together?

In May and June 1945 trained Army interviewers set out to discover the answers. They questioned 250 men, the sergeants and line officers who had been with these Black men in combat. Here is what they discovered:

1. At first, most (64 percent) of the officers and noncoms did not like the idea of serving with Negroes, and only a minority were "willing to try it" or "didn't mind."
2. After fighting with Black troops for about sixty days these men were asked: "How well did the colored soldiers perform in combat?" None replied "not well at all"; 1 percent of the noncoms and no officer

said "not so well"; 16 percent of the officers and 17 percent of the noncoms said "fairly well"; and 84 percent of the officers and 81 percent of the noncoms said "very well."

3. These white men who had, on the whole, not welcomed Negroes, were asked after serving with them: "How have the white and colored soldiers got along together?" *None, not a single man, said "not well."* Seven percent of the officers and 36 percent of the noncoms said "fairly well"; and 73 percent of the officers and 60 percent of the noncoms said "very well."
4. And when these men were asked: "Has your feeling changed since having served in the same unit with colored soldiers?" *none, not a single man, said his attitude had become less favorable*, while 77 percent of the officers and noncoms said they felt more favorable toward them ("feel more respect for them," "like them better") than they had at first.

Those are the facts. These figures become more dramatic when one notes some of the actual comments made by the whites. A captain from Virginia said, "This colored platoon of 35 men with no prepared positions was counterattacked by 90 Germans. The platoon commander had just been captured. They killed 46 and took 35 prisoners, without losing any ground or having any casualties"; a first lieutenant from California, "They're the best platoon in the regiment"; another first lieutenant from Connecticut, "They are very aggressive as fighters—really good at fighting in woods and at close-quarter work. The only trouble is getting them to stop: they just keep pushing"; a platoon sergeant from Georgia, "There never has been any sign of trouble. We like them and they like us"; a platoon sergeant from South Carolina, "When I heard about it, I said I'd be damned if I'd wear the same shoulder patch they did. After that first day

when we saw how they fought, I changed my mind. They're just like any of the other boys to us"; a captain from California, "They just did their job and did damn well and finally the white soldiers accepted them on their own merits."

One further point: a cross-section of combat units *which had never fought with Blacks* showed that 62 percent said they would dislike "very much" to serve with them. But among infantrymen who *had served with them* only 7 percent had this feeling, 32 percent said they "would like it," 28 percent said "just as soon have it as any other setup" (*a total of 60 percent who were favorable toward mixed companies*), and one-third said they would "rather not, but it would not matter too much."

To summarize: When Black soldiers were placed within hitherto all-white combat units the majority of the white men resented the act and doubted its practicality. The vast majority of these originally dubious white men stated, after serving with them, that the Blacks fought "very well." It was unanimously agreed that the men got along together (fought and lived together) without trouble, and the vast majority stated that they had got along together very well. And it was unanimously agreed that this experience of common effort did not result in worsened feelings but, on the contrary, over three out of every four white soldiers stated that because of it their regard and respect for the Negro had risen.

What is outstanding here? Certainly not that these Black men fought well. Anyone, except an ignoramus, knows that the Afro-American proved his capabilities as a fighter long before the recent war. Outstanding is the additional proof this experience offers that racism is a cancer which, to exist, must be nurtured by stimulation, by a positive policy of maintaining mores, customs, laws, and propaganda that serve to feed the deadly growth.

Remove these stimuli and the blight withers. Replace

them by others—as in this case by officially sanctioned fellowship, supported by explanation and action—and the poison vanishes, to be succeeded by respect and comradeship.

*This chapter was first published in *New Masses*, Feb. 12, 1946. The episode described is not mentioned at all in Richard M. Dalfiume's *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts, 1939-1953* (Columbia, Mo., 1969).*

Two Hangings on Guam

It is 9:22 in the morning of January 27, 1954. An armored truck stops twenty yards from a newly erected scaffold near a hangar at the Northwest Military Air Field on the Pacific island of Guam. Armed guards dot the area. A Black man, twenty-four years old, climbs out of the truck and walks with firm tread to the gallows, mounts its seventeen steps, and, directing his remarks to assembled newsmen, says:

They are making a big mistake and they are not accomplishing anything by executing me. Even after the execution, if they find the guilty parties, I do not hold in my heart anything against them. But I pray forgiveness for them and I pray for those who are making this mistake.

The executioner offers to strap him to a body support. He rejects it and turns to the minister. "Please read the 23rd Psalm," he says. Over his head is placed a black hood; sounds issue from it as though he is still seeking to speak. As the trap is sprung the minister is reading, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." It is 9:30; at 9:45 the twenty-four-year-old is still. A doctor pronounces him dead.

Ten minutes later another truck appears. This vehicle, balking at its task, has broken down and is pushed onto the scene by an ambulance. Soon this ambulance will haul the corpse of him who now jumps out of the truck.

A thirty-six-year-old Negro man this time. He, too, walks firmly up the gallows steps, and also rejects the body support. The officer in charge is nervous; four times his prisoner has tried to escape. Confidentially, the officer tells a reporter: "He is a brute."

The "brute" does not ask for prayers. He turns to the apprehensive officer and says, so that all may hear: "You are just complying with an order, sir. You have not solved the crime." The hood is fastened. It is 10:08; the trap is sprung. At 10:25 the body is still, its breath gone, its neck broken. A doctor pronounces him dead. The body is removed. All is in order.

Five years before, in January 1949, these two men—Pvt. Herman P. Dennis, Jr., the first to hang, and S/Sgt. Robert W. Burns—and a third Negro member of an Air Force service outfit, Pvt. Calvin Dennis (no relation to Herman) were arrested separately by the Guam police—that is, by Marines, since Guam was administered by the Navy. Each was accused of participating in the rape-murder a month before of a young white woman, Ruth Farnsworth, a clerk in The Jade Shop, a curio store.

The men were questioned individually. The question period lasted from five to ten days. During this time each was held incommunicado. None was told of his rights in terms of answering or not answering questions; none was told that anything he might say would be used against him in a trial. None was allowed to see counsel or anyone else, except the questioners and certain "persuaders."

It is the jail in Agana, Guam. Lt. Comdr. James P. Hackett, U.S. Naval Reserve, Chief of Police, is present. So is Albert E. Riedel, Inspector of Police, Berkeley, California, called in as an expert consultant. For the rest,

we turn to a letter written in 1949 by Calvin Dennis:*

I didn't know anything about this crime . . . I didn't know what it was all about. So this fellow named Hackett start asking me questions about the crime that happen on the 11th of Dec. 1948; I told him I don't know anything about no crime, until I saw it in the papers. Hackett ask me what I was doing that night. I told him I was driving the bus. He ask me have I any proof of that, I told him I have. Hackett said he didn't believe it. Hackett said I want you to tell me the truth, I said I've told you the truth sir. I said if you don't believe me I will get proof.

Hackett said he found a smock in my truck, and said it belong to the lady that got murdered and rape. Hackett ask me did I know anything about that, I told him no I don't no anything about it. Hackett said it was about 8 or 9 pieces of rags in the truck, and said he picked out the cleanest one. I told him I didn't check to see was any rags.

Hackett said Calvin if you don't tell me the truth, he said he was going to pin murdered and rape on me. I told him I've told the truth & have proof he said he didn't believe a dam word of it.

Hackett said he would make a promise of the \$4000 reward. I would get part of it if I would sign a statement. I told him I Don't know anything about a crime & I am not signing any statement. He said when he got through with me I would sign one. I wouldn't sign it.

Hackett & Redell start beating and knocking on me from eight o'clock in the morning until three o'clock that afternoon. Hackett threaten to hang me, & forcing me to sign a statement, bending my arms, and all that, threw me in the cell for 16 hours without any water or food.

The next day I was so sick and sore, I didn't know wether I was going or coming. Hackett & Redell come out there the next morning and ask me was I going to sign a

*In the course of a campaign to prevent legal murder, these letters were shared with the present writer; they were quoted at the time (1955) with the permission of the men involved and their relatives.

statement. I told him, I know nothing to sign no statement for. Hackett & Redell starting beating on me again, calling me all kinds of names. I was sick and sore, I was crazy. I didn't know what I said, I didn't know what I was doing.

I couldn't help myself. Hackett say if I play ball with him, he would see I got out in 30 days. He said if I didn't play ball with him, he would see I got the death sentence. Hackett show me a photo of a filipino where he got hung on Guam, he said if I didn't tell him something about the crime, that's the way I'll be hanging. He said every n—— he got hung, he would get a promotion. . . .

They had me so crazy after beating and forcing me, I didn't care what I said, and my mind was gone. . . . I had proof for everything I did that night. They didn't believe the truth.

Calvin "confessed."

While Calvin Dennis rested, the preservers of law and order entertained Herman Dennis. "On the 8th of Jan. they began to question me. From that day through to [January 12] they pounded questions after questions, even late one night (not referring to nights I was beaten)." They showed Herman Dennis the same gruesome photo they had shown Calvin. They told him that the other two had "fingered" him. They told him if he confessed and implicated the others he would get at most ten years and be free in maybe five and that he could pick his own job while in jail and he'd come out and he was then only nineteen, so look how young you would still be and will you sign a statement?

Between questioning came visits from three Marine guards.

"All they did was twist my arm behind my back and made a punching bag of my stomach and sides." Finally, on the fourth day: "I had only two choices, die or live—so I thought. I rather serve ten years than die, so I said what he told me to say."

Finally, Burns, a mess sergeant, thirty-one years old. He is arrested on January 10. He, too, is questioned. Commander Hackett wants to know where he was on December 11. He doesn't remember; it's a month ago. What did you eat for dinner on December 10 and December 11? He can't remember that—are these men crazy? What is it they want? Are they investigating a black market in food? I can't remember what I had for dinner three days ago and they want me to tell them what I had thirty days ago.

Riedel hooks him on to what he says is a lie detector. Then he discovers it's about the rape-murder. He denies any knowledge of it. He is not then beaten, but is thrown into a shack with a pig, chickens, vermin, a cot, and a mattress. The next day a paper is flung in to him. It's the *Guam News* reporting his "statement," under the banner head: GUAM KILLER CONFESSES.

Food is brought—the first in twenty-four hours. He is famished, but it is so foul that he flings it to the animal residents of his shack.

Then another visit with Messrs. Hackett and Riedel, with three Marines standing by. Thirteen hours of persistent questioning, the two law officers relieving each other, interspersed with blows from the Marines. But Burns will sign nothing.

Then, in truth, "the rough stuff started; the floor of the room we were in was all that kept me from being beaten into the ground."

The Berkeley inspector hits him with a wet broom. Two Marines work him over with rubber hoses; a third lambastes his face with fists covered by tightly fitting gloves. Burns gets up, breaks loose, and fights back. He knocks the lieutenant commander down with a blow. Then all five are on him at once. Blows and kicks from all directions. He is knocked into insensibility.

When he awakens in a cell both eyes are swollen nearly closed, three teeth are missing, blood oozes from ears,

mouth, nose; forehead and chin are bleeding. He is visited by a Marine. This one is friendly, most sympathetic. He wants to help, he regrets his troubles. He says, Tell me about it, what really happened? Anyone can make a mistake. Burns reiterates his innocence. The friendly one turns on him with a leather thong and beats him.

Inspector Riedel and three Marines appear. They question him for fifteen minutes, then beat him; then question him, then beat him. The sun sets, it is deep into the evening, and now: "I could no longer feel the beating, but could hear the blows, which sounded like they were off in a distance."

Then: "I heard water splashing and was soon aware of some one pouring water on my face. The room spun in a crazy whirl, then became clear."

Someone was talking to him; was it Hackett or Riedel? He didn't know, but then the words became clear: "Sign right here, boy, and everything will be all right."

They will kill me. How shall I stop them? I shall not sign, but how shall I stop them? I say: "If you bring me a priest I will talk." (I am not a Catholic, but maybe asking for a priest will get them to stop.)

It works. They send for a priest; they stop beating him.

The priest comes. What is it? He wants to know, and is especially puzzled when he hears that Burns is not a Catholic. Burns explains. The priest asks if he is innocent. Burns says he is, and the priest says in that case he is to hold out no matter what happens. Burns asks that the priest tell his outfit of his whereabouts and his predicament.

When the priest leaves, the police return. Burns says he will sign. They say that in that case he can have food. Coffee and sandwiches are brought him, and pencil and paper. Burns turns to eat—he is starving. No, not yet. First you write your confession; then you eat.

Burns takes the pencil and he writes: "I, Sgt. Robert W.

Burns, do confess complete innocence of the tragedy of Ruth Farnsworth."

Again, he is beaten until he is unconscious. He awakens on his cot: "I lay on my bed, tried to understand how such things were permitted in the military service of a civilized nation."

Two more days they work on him. He confesses nothing. He pieces together his whereabouts on December 11 and tells it to the tormentors in detail—names, hours, places. Every new detail earns a new blow. For two more days. Then they quit and allow him to see his commanding officer and his chaplain, first warning him to say nothing of his treatment. If he does, he will live, briefly, to regret it.

He tells them nothing, except that he is not guilty.

He is moved from his shack to a cage—an actual cage used to transport animals. And this cage, with the United States Air Force sergeant in it, is placed eight feet from the main road of Agana "where an enraged crowd shouted curses and threats in vile profanity." Then to a stockade to await, with the two others, a trial.

The crime occurred on Saturday, December 11, 1948, at about 8:45 in the evening. Ruth Farnsworth was alone in the Jade Shop at that time, due to a conjunction of rather unusual events. Another part-time clerk, Sue Blackledge, who would normally have been with her, had left at 7:00 P.M. to go dancing. The manager of the store, John W. Arnold, for reasons never made clear, was also absent. The night watchman came regularly at 9:00 P.M. (which was closing time) and remained until 7:00 the following morning.

At about 8:30 that evening, Miss Blackledge says, she passed the shop on her way to the dance (a peculiar circumstance, for passing the shop meant going quite a

bit out of the way to reach the dancehall from her home—this, too, was never explained) and noticed that the lights were out. This was irregular for that hour; nevertheless, she did not go in and did not investigate, though why not is unclear.

At about the same time two military police observed two Filipino soldiers leaving the shop, but apparently noticed nothing unusual and did nothing. That same evening, somewhat earlier—the time was never pinpointed—a Mr. Moylan, operator of a drugstore in the town of Agana, some five or six miles away, and his brother had been in the shop. On leaving they saw two white men, civilians, enter, and they noticed a black civilian car parked outside. (Neither the Filipino soldiers nor the white civilians were ever apprehended, nor does the record disclose that the police sought them, but the testimony as to their presence at the scene of the crime on the evening of its occurrence was never broken down by the prosecution.)

At 9:00 P.M. the night watchman appeared and turned up the light switch. The light did not go on (the wires had been torn out of the main switch in the rear of the store). The watchman struck a match and saw some disorder in the place. He checked the cash register and found seven thousand dollars—there had been no robbery. (This extraordinary sum of cash, in a small curio shop competing with a large Post Exchange just across the street, was never explained.)

The watchman then became aware of the absence of Miss Farnsworth. He left, but did not go across the street to the office of the Provost Marshal, where investigators and military police could be found. Rather, he started to walk to the home of the manager, in Agana. He succeeded in getting a lift and soon reached the manager. The manager and he went to the Agana jail and picked up Commander Hackett, in charge of the police force. The

commander took a Marine with him and the four men reached the shop at something like 9:35 or 9:40. Using flashlights, the men searched about the store. They found on the floor several bobby pins and a lapel watch, and a pair of women's shoes, widely separated, outside. After a few minutes of this—sometime before 10:00 P.M.—Commander Hackett suggested that the search be called off, indicating that it was late, and Saturday evening, and things could wait.

A searching party appeared on the morning of Monday, December 13 (why the police decided not to continue the search that Saturday night and why none was conducted Sunday is unexplained). At 10:30 on the morning of the thirteenth, a private in the search party found Miss Farnsworth, assaulted and apparently violated (later medical testimony was to indicate that there was not conclusive proof of actual rape), some three hundred yards from the shop, in toward uncleared jungle. She was not dead.

Commander Hackett directed the search for clues, sent for a photographer, had pictures taken. All this time no first aid was given the victim. About an hour and a half after Miss Farnsworth was discovered, an ambulance finally came and took her to the military hospital. She died some twelve hours later—about 1:00 A.M. of December 14. Apparently she never regained consciousness—at any rate no statement from her during this twelve-hour period seems to have survived.

The facts appear to show that if search had been instituted at once and had Miss Farnsworth been spared the agony of lying out in the woods all Saturday night, all day Sunday and most of Monday morning, she probably would not have died.

It is clear that the civil administration of the island hoped to keep jurisdiction of the case, to get a quick trial and

conviction, and call the matter settled. So far as the authorities of the Air Force were concerned, apparently there would have been no opposition to this had it not been for the timely and courageous intercession of a Negro chaplain, Captain E. E. Grimmert, attached to the Air Force on Guam.

Captain Grimmert, having finally been permitted to see the men, wrote at once to a relative of one of them—Mr. Elbert A. Dennis, then of Indianapolis, uncle of Herman P. Dennis, Jr. He told the uncle of the tragedy that had befallen the men and added: "We feel certain that they are not guilty of the charge; however, they [*i.e.*, the Dennises, not Burns] have been terrorized into signing confessions."

He urged that other relatives be notified at once and the NAACP be contacted so that an effective defense might be organized. Mr. Dennis did this at once, and from then on remained in the center of the struggle to save the lives of the men.

Captain Grimmert meanwhile began to organize something of a defense movement in Guam. He asked permission of superior officers to go among the Black troops and appeal for support of the prisoners and for donations to hire a civilian attorney. An attorney was contacted on the island and agreed—for the immoderate fee of \$15,000—to enter the case. Staggered by the sum but determined to go on, the chaplain continued, with great success, in gathering financial and moral support.

At this point the Air Command intervened, forbade further defense efforts of this nature, and prohibited the collection of money. Simultaneously, the case was taken out of the civil administration (that is, the Naval Department) and placed within the jurisdiction of the Air Force.

The trials, originally set for March 18, 1949, were first put off one month and finally postponed until May. This delay was due to a defense demand for a court-martial

composed of officers from an area other than Guam (the court was flown in from Tokyo) and, especially, to the efforts of the defense to get counsel unprejudiced against Black defendants, and eager to really defend them.

Indeed, the second postponement of the trial came only because Chaplain Grimmer, on behalf of Herman Dennis and Robert Burns, wired the President of the United States telling him that the men were being denied defense counsel of their choice and, for good measure, sent a similar wire to the *Pittsburgh Courier*. With this wire, that leading Negro newspaper became interested in the case, an interest that was to grow as the years passed and reach unprecedented heights just before the final execution date.

But the fact is that the men never did get the counsel they wanted; above all, they did not get the services of Lt. Col. Edward F. Daly, then attached to the Judge Advocate office on the island. All the details of this complex story need not be told here. Suffice it to say: Daly (a white officer) had succeeded in gaining personal knowledge of the frameup character of the case; he had gotten hold of evidence implicating other persons whose actual identity he did not know. When the men requested his services, he was arrested, charged with ungentlemanly and unofficer-like behavior, confined for mental examination, his papers rifled (and important evidence bearing on this case stolen), and forced to resign from the service.

Moreover, his secretary, Mary Louise Hill, swore that she had overheard conversations involving the police and Daly which indicated that the prisoners had been beaten into confessions and that the police said a deal had been made with Calvin Dennis promising commutation of his death sentence if he confessed and implicated the others. She also swore (in affidavits presented *after the trials had ended*) that the "accusations against Col. Daly were malicious and unfounded, and brought only

to prevent him from being defense counsel for the accused." Further,

that she assisted Col. Daly in preparation of defense of the accused, and that he was in possession of material evidence in their behalf which was not presented at the Court-Martial, and while he was confined, many of the papers, and other evidence, was stolen from his office and quarters. It appears to her that truth, honesty and justice have not yet reached the Air Force in Guam.

Miss Hill further states that prior to the trial the government informed her that her services were no longer desired on Guam and that she was to be sent home at government expense. But she remained behind long enough to testify at the trial that she had heard Commander Hackett state that the confessions had been beaten out of the men. Thereafter, a later affidavit makes clear, and even a Review Board admits, the prosecution prevailed upon her to sign a false sworn statement repudiating this testimony but, getting a conviction despite her testimony, the false affidavit never was presented.

After testifying for the defense, Miss Hill was returned to the States—but now at her own expense! A suit for transportation charges was filed by Miss Hill against the government.

Indicative of what the legal situation finally resolved itself into is the fact that the attorney for Sgt. Burns—an attorney in a capital case—was assigned at the last moment and had never seen the man he was to defend until *one day* before the trial commenced! And the "defense" of Burns took ninety minutes; defense counsel actually ordered him (in the military sense, of officer to enlisted man) not to take the stand in his own defense, though he urgently desired to do so.

The three men were convicted and sentenced to die. Herman Dennis was tried first; his trial ended May 16. Burns was tried last; his trial ended May 30.

The trials were held in the Cross Roads Service Club. Cushioned sofas and chairs were provided for the hundreds of men, women, and children who attended (about two hundred were at the first trial, as many as eight hundred at the last). Hawkers sold soft drinks at momentary interruptions in the legal rigmarole. Outside, soldiers armed with rifles, one every twenty feet, surrounded the club. Racist hysteria was at a fever pitch.

The convictions were based primarily upon the "confessions," especially that of Calvin Dennis, for Herman Dennis repudiated his confession at his trial. Calvin Dennis did not; he held to the hope of a deal that would bring him release in not over ten years. However, Calvin Dennis could not tolerate the horror of the deal, and in a private letter (in this writer's possession) written as early as September 1949 he repudiated his confession, stated that it was extracted by torture (as quoted earlier), and affirmed his absolute innocence. Two years later, in September 1951, he repeated the substance of this letter in legal affidavit form.

The other evidence adduced in court was of the flimsiest circumstantial kind. One white person testified that he had seen Burns and Herman Dennis near the scene of the crime early on the evening of its occurrence. Another testified that he had seen three Negro soldiers, who looked like the defendants, on the road near the shop that same evening.

One Negro soldier swore that he heard Burns boast, at breakfast in the mess hall, that he had killed Ruth Farnsworth. But this could hardly have had much weight even with the members of the court-martial for others had been at this table at the same time and all swore they heard nothing like that statement. (Burns later explained

that this man had a personal grudge against him, for Burns had caught him in a theft.)

A piece of a smock was produced that Commander Hackett swore he had found in Calvin Dennis' truck and which the prosecution insisted belonged to the murdered woman. But Miss Blackledge testified that the smock was not worn by Miss Farnsworth the night of the murder, and other testimony made it clear that Commander Hackett, or some helper, had most conveniently found this smock under the seat of that particular truck, and still under that seat some five weeks after the act was committed!

Perhaps most damaging in the minds of the officers of the court was Miss Blackledge's testimony that she had heard Herman Dennis express disapproval of the jim crow arrangements in Guam, and his belief that the separation of Black and white was wrong.

But basic to the conviction were the confessions—including one repudiated in court and the other soon thereafter renounced—and this despite Miss Hill's testimony that she had heard the police chief boast of the violence he had used to extract both confessions.

The court overlooked not only this evidence of torture. It chose to ignore other details, such as the fact that the men were incommunicado for from five to ten days, while the law in Guam required arraignment before a judge within twenty-four hours of arrest; or that none of the men was told of his rights under the law, especially in terms of making or not making statements; or that it was proven that the prosecution had tampered with and forced into a perjurious statement Miss Hill, a witness in the proceedings.

The court overlooked sworn testimony pointing to the presence at the scene of the crime, about when it occurred, of at least four other individuals and that none of these had been apprehended. It ignored the fact that

the prosecution had not thought of taking fingerprints at the scene—or, at least, had not introduced them in evidence—though beer cans were found near Miss Farnsworth. It ignored the fact that a man's jacket had been at the scene of the crime; that it belonged to none of the defendants and did not fit any of them.

The court chose to ignore the iron-clad alibis of Herman Dennis and Burns, both of whom had several witnesses who swore as to their whereabouts when the crime was committed and who told in great detail, each independently, exactly what the defendants were doing and why they remembered this. We give just a few examples, from the record of the trial of Herman Dennis:

Herman Dennis had testified that on the evening of the crime he had been to a movie near his outfit and that he had seen a particular picture which he described in detail. He stated that he had met X and had sat next to Y and had asked for a light from Z and had walked back to the barracks with Q and so forth. Then T/Sgt. N. G. Brooks swore that he saw the accused buy a ticket to the movie at 7:45 on the evening of December 11. Sgt. O. H. Clayton, assistant manager of the movie house, swore that the defendant was in the building that night. T/Sgt. J. D. White swore that the defendant sat next to him throughout the movie and that he had come in around 8:00 P.M. Cpl. M. S. Scroggins swore that he saw the defendant after the show and that they walked back to the barracks together talking about the picture. That theater was about six miles away from the Jade Shop where, at about 8:45, Miss Farnsworth was assaulted.

All the facts tend to show that the court was intent on convicting these men and that nothing could have changed its verdict. The whole spirit of the proceedings may be sensed from one paragraph of the findings of the Review Board upholding the verdict in the case of Herman Dennis:

The court had its opportunity, and persons reviewing the record of trial will have theirs, to judge the weight and credibility of Herman Dennis against that of the Attorney General of the Naval Government of Guam, the Chief of Police of Guam and Mr. Riedel of the Berkeley Police Department, who are men of established character, reputation and integrity.

This says about as clearly as an official document under the circumstances can: Who can take the word of a Negro and his Negro friends when it is opposed to "distinguished" respectable white officers of the law? How shall "law and order" be maintained if the officers of the law are not upheld, no matter how flimsy their case and how apparently watertight the alibi of the Black defendant, especially one proven to have been open in his opposition to jim crow?*

The paragraph exudes racism, snobbishness, and callousness and these were the attributes of the "legal" procedure that condemned the men to die.

As for "character" and "integrity" let us, indeed, offer some comparative notes in terms of the chief of police of Guam and Herman Dennis. Lt. Comdr. Hackett for years was a member of the Chicago Police Department, and then was attached to the police force of General MacArthur in Tokyo, Manila, and Seoul. Well known is the incorruptible character and sterling integrity of these police forces. Their reputations for humane conduct and the model they have offered in terms of antiracist and antichauvinist conduct are universal knowledge. Commander Hackett's behavior in connection with the young Negro man named Herman Dennis, Jr., is no doubt the kind of behavior he learned in "handling" the Black

*Sgt. Burns was also quite militant in his opposition to discrimination. In 1947 the Air Force banned the *Pittsburgh Courier* from its McChord Field Base. Burns led in the successful fight to reverse this order.

population of the South Side of Chicago and in "dealing with" the "natives" in Japan, the Philippines, and Korea.

As for the Negro prisoner: he was all of nineteen years when apprehended, so that he had had a long time in which to befoul his character and besmirch his integrity. He began working as a small child living in Texas, and studied hard at night and became a plane mechanic before he was seventeen. He had, he writes in a letter, "planned going to school and earn a degree as an instructor or qualified mechanic." Then he had hoped to "leave for Trinidad or some other foreign country where I can make something for my family, and in the meantime have freedom."

But he hadn't been able to make it, this Black youngster in rural Texas, and so as soon as he could he joined the Air Force. The first notable thing to happen to him in the service occurred in September 1947 when he was stationed in Keesler Field, Mississippi. A terrible hurricane hit the Gulf region, flooding whole counties, taking many lives and ruining millions in property. About four hundred yards from the mainland, not far from the field, eight (white) people, including two children, were marooned on an island, with no water, no food, and no light. Volunteers were called for to cross the four hundred yards of swirling water, in hurricane weather, and carry back these eight people. Six servicemen volunteered and among them was seventeen-year-old Herman Dennis, already almost six feet tall, weighing near one hundred-seventy pounds and strong and concerned about people dying. So Herman Dennis and five other men crossed the waters and got to the marooned people and brought them all out, one by one, safely. For this, in Mississippi, the Negro serviceman Herman Dennis, Jr., received an official Letter of Appreciation from his commanding officer, Major R. W. Deppe, going through channels, which concluded: "I want everyone to know

that your courage and physical stamina made you an example of what the Air Force desires in its men. If I never had known it before, I certainly would know now that you are a real soldier."

The next year Herman Dennis, all of eighteen now, was in Guam, and wrote home how anxious he was to make good and how he was trying to get permission to go to school and learn more about mechanics and engineering, but somehow all his applications fell through and he could not make it: "It is hard to go to school over here. I didn't have the opportunity while in the States. . . . Since I have been in this army I haven't accomplish any thing I want; they won't give it to me."

And in January 1949, as we have seen, Herman Dennis, Jr., was being entertained by the distinguished Commander Hackett. In prison, too, Herman showed he was a real soldier, for from it he wrote, in a letter smuggled out:

I've seen enough segregation in my 21 years [it was late 1950] . . . I hated here because I tell these people what I think of them . . . I don't let them push me around and talk to me like I am a dog. That is why I was put in isolation for 14 days on bread and water and a full meal every third day.

All review boards continually rejected the appeals of the men for a new trial. These rejections came in the face of not only the flimsiness of the evidence in the original trial, but of the fact that post-trial affidavits established the frameup character of the proceedings to the full. First, there was Calvin Dennis' detailed and circumstantial affidavit repudiating his confession as torn from him by torture and bribery. Second, there was the two thousand five hundred word affidavit by former Colonel Daly detailing his personal knowledge of the frameup, both against the accused and against himself. The same affidavit declares that he knows the mail of Chaplain Grimmett was tampered with and held up by the Air Force and

that the commanding officer was anxious "to get rid of Grimmatt." Daly declared that he knew that one of the men involved in framing evidence was a former CID man who had been fired because of alleged participation in corruption and that he was promised his job back if he performed well in this case. And Daly stated that he had accumulated evidence, since stolen, tending to prove the innocence of the prisoners, and that this evidence had been deliberately kept from the court.

Third, there was the two thousand word affidavit of Chaplain E. E. Grimmatt who told of the opposition he met when he tried to help secure adequate defense for the men; of being informed by a Marine sergeant that the men were being framed; of his phone being tapped and his mail tampered with. In this affidavit the chaplain swore that he had personally heard two generals declare that come what may the convictions must stand for "we must save the Air Force at all cost"; that he personally knew the prosecuting officer threatened and attempted to bribe the prisoners; that he had in his own possession a written offer from Commander Hackett to Herman Dennis of a ten-year sentence in return for his confession; that this document was stolen, together with other material relevant to the case; that the racist feeling on the island was so intense that in any case no fair trial of Negro men was possible.

Fourth, there was the striking fact that Herman Dennis in his "confession" and Calvin Dennis in his had each referred to the other as "brother" when in fact neither was related to the other in any way whatsoever. They had not met until November 1948 when Herman had brought Calvin a letter meant for the latter and mistakenly given to the former. The clear effort, on the part of both men, in making this glaringly false assertion, was to cast doubts upon the confessions themselves, quite apart from the torture used to extract the confessions and the fact that

both repudiated them (Calvin not until after his death sentence had been commuted to life imprisonment; Herman at his trial).

All this, plus the affidavit of Miss Hill, already referred to, did not move any review board or body of persons, including Presidents Truman and Eisenhower, to grant a new trial or to commute the death sentences of Burns and Herman Dennis.

What was behind the frameup and behind the murder of Miss Farnsworth? Herman Dennis and Robert Burns and Calvin Dennis each independently believed and declared (Burns publicly in the pages of the *Pittsburgh Courier*) that the island of Guam was a center of a multi-million-dollar dope-smuggling racket, plus colossal investments in black-market operations involving tires, gasoline, medicines, fuses, batteries, and a thousand and one other items supplied to an air, naval, and military center. They further were convinced that the Jade Shop (the little curio store that happened to have \$7,000 in its register on one particular evening) was a center of illegal activities related to all this. (It may be relevant to point out that, in the pretrial investigations, the owner of the Jade Shop admitted to drug addiction.)

Given this enormous illegal activity and the tremendous investments they involved, the police department, if no other authorities, were most probably deeply involved. All the defendants were further convinced that Miss Farnsworth knew too much and was planning to or had threatened to talk and that therefore she was killed. They believed that this is why the police were remarkably lax in searching for her and amateurish in failing to seek or obtain any real evidence and in failing to discover any of the four people whom witnesses swore they saw at the shop the evening of the crime.

After the convictions of the two Dennises but prior to the trial of Burns, Commander Hackett urged Sgt. Burns

for the last time to confess his guilt and to implicate the others in the crime. In return he promised commutation of a death sentence and relatively quick release from jail.

Burns writes that he answered him in this way:

Why should I ruin the lives of two men whom I do not know? . . . You may lie, use brute force, browbeat, withhold evidence and twist the facts of this case into a complicated mess if you wish, but your nights will be sleepless ones. . . .

As I have told you before, you have handled this thing badly, so badly in fact that I am of the opinion you know who the killer is, and in some way are connected with this crime.

Why did you wait until Monday to investigate the disappearance of Ruth Farnsworth? Why did you fail to search for fingerprints? How do you account for the lights being turned out at a switch box which was located in the back room of the shop? Only a person who was very familiar with the building could have known the location of the main switch.

You claim the crime was done in twenty minutes. How could a stranger enter the front of the store, walk past an employee, go behind the show cases of the jewelry to the back room, turn out the lights by the main switch, assault an employee, carry her out of the front door, place her in a truck, drive around to an isolated area, and commit rape three times, without being seen from the Provost Marshal's office directly across the street? All this done in twenty minutes; a fantastic fabrication of false facts to cover your guilt or incompetency. I am no longer in your jail where you could beat me at will. So there is no promise you can offer or nothing you can do to make me admit something I have not done.

The whole case, the curious conjunction of unusual events, the affidavits, the tortures—the whole congeries of evidence—give overwhelming weight to the suspicions of the prisoners. When one understands the millions and millions involved in the smuggling and the black marketing and the power and ruthlessness of the gangsters concerned, it becomes clearer why generals were so intent on carrying through this case “in order to

protect the Air Force”; why, despite the manifest need for at least the most careful investigation by people (*including Negro people*) not professionally involved in the services concerned, this was repeatedly refused by the highest officers of the land, including two Presidents of the United States.

From January 1949 through January 1954, for five excruciatingly long years of torment, the prisoners maintained their dignity and their courage (with a temporary and thoroughly understandable lapse on the part of Calvin Dennis).

Sgt. Burns was baited, beaten, put in solitary, starved, tempted, but he yielded not an inch. The fire of the ordeal tempered him, it did not destroy him, and in this he was fittingly representative of his people who have endured over three hundred years of crucifixion and have developed and matured in resisting it.

Herman Dennis, hardly more than a lad when jailed, similarly never crawled and never begged and never broke, but defied the jailers and grew in the process. His letters from prison, many of them smuggled out, belong in the magnificent company of literature that has sprung out of the hearts of jailed martyrs. The following excerpts are representative:

It hurts to know you have been convicted for something you didn't do. Even though this is not the first time it happen.

Dear [he writes to an aunt] I was convicted to Death. It hurts to know you are convicted for a crime you know nothing about, but that is Life. Have no fear, it doesn't have to be approved . . . don't worry about death.

It is not easy to continue to hold your chin high when your life is at stake. You can never tell what these people will do knowing you were framed and under force at all time.

I am damn sick of this hell hole. . . . Had I told you what I have been doing they would send the letter back, so you can guess what it is. . . . I'm sick of being punished for someone

else, and I'm tired of being pushed around, therefore, you can guess what is happening.

I notice in the paper . . . in Los Angeles where the white is trying to prevent other whites from selling homes to Negroes. But just the same they are teaching Japanese democracy when they should teach themselves. Where is the justice the western powers (American white men) so speak about? Are we going back to slavery again, or is it we are still living in slavery, and it isn't anything but propaganda to the nations that the Negro race has freedom. What freedom? Freedom of what? If hanging our people every day is freedom, they can have it. The only freedom we have is the freedom of sacrificing our lives for that of the white men during the time of war.

I'm so full with anger and grief that my stomach muscles are turning and trembling. I can't seem to get frighten. It just hurt like hell all over. . . . I'm trying hard to control myself and keep my chin up. . . . It's hard, terribly hard.

He tries to explain in a letter that must get by the authorities what he is made to endure:

You don't know what it is like here—It's like standing away from the wall leaning against it with your weight only on your five fingers of each hand. Try it for twenty minutes, ten, with your arms straight forward if you think it's easy. . . . Oh, yes, my cell is also cold with cracks in the floor.

A month later the youngster is in the hospital suffering from stomach ulcers and pneumonia.

Meanwhile, the campaign for their freedom and vindication went on. Sgt. Burns and Herman Dennis helped conduct the fight from their cells, suggesting friends, organizations, forms of pressure, petition campaigns, legal steps, and the like.

Outside, the campaign was pioneered in by Chaplain Grimmett, and then by Elbert A. Dennis, Herman's uncle. This man, with extremely limited funds, a family, job, and the pressures for conformity so heavy upon a

Negro person in the United States in the midst of the cold war, nevertheless dedicated himself with singleminded devotion to the struggle. He wrote a thousand letters—to the NAACP, trade unions, the Civil Rights Congress, relatives and friends, senators and congressmen, presidents, generals, lawyers, newspapers—and of very great importance a steady stream of letters to the men themselves, cheering them up, assuring them of his faith in their innocence, and telling them something of his efforts. With him throughout the fight and contributing important efforts was his wife, Mrs. Claudia Dennis. Of very great consequence was the early and sustained interest of the powerful *Pittsburgh Courier*. Helpful from the beginning was Willard B. Ransom, distinguished Indianapolis attorney and a leader of the NAACP.

Legally, the appeals were carried on by the NAACP, with Thurgood Marshall, Robert A. Carter, and Frank Reeves, of the legal department of the association, and especially Mr. Carter, fighting hard to secure justice.

The first stage of the legal struggle concentrated on the effort, within the legalistic framework of the Air Force itself, to get a review board or other competent authority to order a new court-martial. This failed and in August 1951 President Truman approved the sentence of the men, but withheld execution until all legal remedies were exhausted. The next and final stage of the legal battle was the effort of the NAACP to get the civil courts to order the Air Force to relinquish its hold over the case and to turn the proceedings over to the civil authorities. The structure of the law is built so as to make such transfer practically impossible, but the NAACP pushed the battle right up to the Supreme Court after all lower courts had rejected their appeals.

The U.S. Supreme Court did hear a plea by the NAACP seeking to convince the Court that it should issue a writ of habeas corpus instructing the military authorities to

turn the men over to the civil administration for incarceration and new trial.

In February 1953 Robert A. Carter and Frank Reeves argued this case before the Court while for the United States, arguing against any process to delay execution, was the solicitor general in person.

In June 1953 the Supreme Court decided, 6-3, against the appeal of the NAACP. Justices Douglas, Black, and Frankfurter filed unusually strong dissents. Justice Frankfurter distinctly said that "this case should be set down for reargument" and Justices Black and Douglas italicized that "*undisputed facts*" indicated in the clearest possible terms that basic constitutional rights of the petitioners had been denied.

Nevertheless, the whole process reverted to the sole custody of the Air Force and it was intent on hanging the men. President Eisenhower, taking its intent as his order, refused commutation and ordered that the men be hanged. The last week in January 1954 was set for the execution and the gallows were erected in Guam.

Now the defense effort reached a crescendo, climaxed with the publication in the *Pittsburgh Courier* for five successive weeks of the magnificent words of Sgt. Burns himself. Meanwhile the paper assigned its managing editor, William G. Nunn, to personally write about and "cover" the story. The *Courier* threw itself fully into an effort to persuade the President to *postpone* the executions until an impartial commission, with Negro members as well as white, could review the whole case—a case which three U.S. Supreme Court Justices said reflected most gravely on the administration of justice and one in which basic rights of the prisoners were grossly violated.

On January 10, 1954, Mrs. Robert L. Vann, publisher of the paper, personally wrote to President Eisenhower making this appeal and requesting permission to discuss

the matter with proper authorities at the White House. On January 13, 1954, Mrs. Vann and Mr. Nunn spent two and a quarter hours at the White House explaining what they wanted, pointing to some of the horrors of the case, and in turn listening to reassuring statements of great concern that justice and only justice be done.

Nevertheless, despite this quite unprecedented action, the President of the United States insulted decent opinion throughout the country and especially displayed contempt for the Negro people and their spokesmen by turning down all appeals, refusing to grant any delay or provide for any additional review of the case. He ordered that the executions proceed as per schedule.

And when, on January 27, 1954, Robert W. Burns and Herman P. Dennis were hanged, two absolutely innocent Negro men were executed and not by the order of any governor of some "backward" state so that the U.S. government could plead that "states' rights" tied its hands. They were hanged by the direct order and on the personal responsibility of the President of the United States, contemptuous of the clearly and unanimously expressed opinion of every major Negro organization in the country and every Negro newspaper, and of the last-minute (alas, too late) expressions seeking delay from leaders of CIO and AFL unions and the entire range of progressive sentiment in the country. Robert W. Burns and Herman P. Dennis were legally lynched by the government of the United States. This act was done in support of the attempted terrorization and the continued superexploitation of the Afro-American people, and in support of a frameup almost certainly hiding the activities of a gang of smugglers, black marketeers, and murderers, with influence and power reaching into the seats of the mighty.

Robert Burns attempted to send the series which the *Courier* published through proper channels, but he was

refused and they were smuggled through. In a similar manner did this undaunted man get through to Nunn of that paper his last letter, written a few days before he was executed, and published by the *Courier* on January 30, 1954. Writing, said Burns, while "death hovers over my door," he reiterated, "I have committed no murder." He said he had "always believed in the strength of goodness and truth" and that he had known "nothing but humiliation and bitter suffering for five long years." Were he ever to be freed, he said, "I would slowly crawl around the world to find those responsible for this suffering—the sweetness of vengeance would be mine." And in his closing lines he urged: "Let my people know we are yet in bondage."

The Dennis-Burns case cries out for a complete overhauling of the archaic court-martial system in this country, with its vicious sentences, its officer bias, its caste domination, its race prejudice, and its nearly complete independence from civil control. It teaches that in the United States, in civil and military courts, no Negro person should ever be condemned to die under any circumstances when Negroes are not involved in the judging and sentencing. The simple fact is that in this country the odds against a Black person getting anything approximating justice from the police and from the courts, military and civil, are a million to one.

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«XVI»

The Watts Ghetto Uprising

What caused the uprising in Los Angeles in August 1965?

What caused slave uprisings? The master class had several answers: (1) abolitionist propaganda; (2) political demagogues deliberately stirring up trouble; (3) fanatical busybodies coming down into the South and "looking for trouble"; (4) a general spirit of lawlessness that was infesting the nineteenth century—as witness rebellions in France and Hungary and Poland and Germany; (5) encouragement to the questioning of slavery coming from weak-minded theologians and crafty subversives probably in the pay of Queen Victoria; (6) the natural savagery of the Negro—and if this contradicted the other stereotype concerning his naturally docile nature, no matter. Which "argument" was used depended upon the circumstances and in any case nobody took reason too seriously.

The above paragraph summarizes the historical data. These constituted the various explanations offered by slaveowners and their scribes in the face of real or attempted slave outbreaks. The above paragraph also summarizes present-day "explanations" offered by the ruling class and its scribes. Only a few words need modernization: instead of Abolitionist, read Communist; instead of Queen Victoria, read the Kremlin, and so on.

What *was* the cause of slave unrest and uprisings? Of

course, it was—slavery! As the Abolitionists correctly said thirteen decades ago, in replying to this slaveowning propaganda, there is only one way to end slave uprisings; if undertaken, we absolutely guarantee that the rebellions will end and if not undertaken we guarantee that the rebellions will not end: To end the slave uprisings, end slavery. Exactly the same may be said and must be said today. There is only one way to end ghetto uprisings; when this is done the uprisings will end and until it is done they will not end. To eliminate ghetto uprisings, eliminate ghettos.

Of course, behind the slave uprisings were general data and particular data: news of popular protest and uprising reaching the ears of the slaves; the belief that others did know and that some at least did care; generally a period of economic trouble; often significant population shifts, especially a rise in the proportion of slaves to nonslaves. And there were particular sparks: some especially heated and significant election; some especially vicious act or series of acts, especially involving Black women; perhaps some natural disaster, such as a drought, intensifying the normal suffering; some excitement among the slaveowners for any of several reasons, and so on.

And behind the ghetto uprisings are general causes: unemployment twice or thrice the average; family incomes half or a quarter the average; housing abominable; schools awful; prices high, and higher than elsewhere; public service bad and much worse than elsewhere; the morbidity and mortality rates, especially among children, much higher than for the rest of the population; a general atmosphere of indignity and contempt, of being forgotten and derided. It is all this and all this together and every "little" thing: no mailbox is handy, the street lights don't work, no store will cash the check; the damn garbage has accumulated; and the damned police with

their payoffs, and the case worker with the smirk and the advice—Now don't be so bitter. Yes, it's the "little" things, too.

All this was in Watts and is in every Watts in the country. The figures are easily available and they get printed so often that the type wears out and it looks as though nobody really sees the figures anymore, anyway.

God knows, in Los Angeles and in California, there were warnings enough, and sparks enough. The Right is there in full force, especially in southern California and most especially in Los Angeles. They had just put in a real nineteenth-century moderate in charge of education; and the Roman Catholic archbishop would have been backward in the fifteenth century; and the fair housing law was just repealed; and a song-and-dance nincompoop had just been made a senator and another Hollywood dunce would soon become governor.

The radio and television sets in Los Angeles blare for hour after hour, especially in the evening, with messages from the extreme Right, sponsored as "public services" by various oil companies and banks and razor-blade corporations. The newspapers are generally reactionary. And Billy Hargis and his Christian Crusaders had just been in Los Angeles, the weekend before the outbreak, and told all his one thousand percent American listeners how marvelous the city's police chief and mayor were. And the marvelous mayor stayed away that same weekend from a meeting where the Negro community was—again—trying to get some action out of the "antipoverty" program and trying to get some participation in it; and, the very evening before the lid blew off, several representatives of younger groups in Watts had warned police and other officials that tempers were really frayed and it would be wise if the city would employ only Black police in Watts at least for a while and the answer had come in an especially heavy concentration of police cars packed

with white officers—Chief Parker's force was 96 percent white, anyway—touring the ghetto and looking for trouble. Then they got it.

The police, in Los Angeles and everywhere in the United States, constitute a special point of bitterness among the Negro masses, hence something in particular must be said about this. The police today—like the slave patrols of yesterday—make up the fist of ruling class power and symbolize, as they physically enforce, the enslavement of the Negro. Historically and currently, the rule is to assign the worst, the most brutal, the most racist, the quickest on the trigger, to the ghettos.

Most specifically, in the case of Los Angeles, testimony is unanimous—even among those who reject the charge—that Negro condemnation of police brutality was the single overriding specific in the Watts uprising.

Most of the press puts the charge of police brutality in quotation marks, or refers to “alleged” police brutality, or ascribes the charge itself purely to Black witnesses, as though it were “self-serving” testimony, or—and this is especially marked in connection with Watts—attributes it to the machinations of the ubiquitous Communists.

A few examples: William S. White, in the *Washington Post*, sneers at “the automatic charge of police brutality”; David Lawrence, in *U.S. News and World Report* (March 22, 1965), admitting that perhaps some police are “prejudiced” in the South, asks incredulously, however, how can “the cry of police brutality be raised” outside the South? And directly to the point are the assertions of the mayor and the chief of police of Los Angeles. First Mayor Yorty:

*The mind of Lawrence, that bellwether of the Right, is inadvertently revealed in this same article, when he writes: “Even in the days of rigid segregation . . . the relations between whites and Negroes were far better in many parts of the South than they have become in recent years in the North.”

Criminal elements have seized upon the false charge to try to excuse their lawlessness. It's the “big lie” technique. The cry of police brutality has been shouted in cities all over the world by Communists, dupes and the demagogues (*New York Times*, August 18, 1965).

And now Chief Parker; being interviewed by the staff of *U.S. News and World Report* (August 30, 1965):

Question: Negroes keep talking about police brutality.

Answer: This is a terribly vicious canard which is used to conceal Negro criminality, to try to prevent the Negro public image from reflecting the criminal activity in which some of the Negroes are engaged, to try and find someone else to blame for their crimes.

If the American public continue to buy this canard, they are going to lose their security. Our international enemies won't have to worry, we will defeat ourselves internally.

Anyone who has lived in the United States for any period of time with his eyes open—and has not spent all his time commuting between Scarsdale and Wall Street with his nose buried in the *Wall Street Journal*—knows that the criminality of American police is notorious, that their illegal and extralegal activity is scandalous, and that, in particular, their brutality in connection with the poor and above all the Black (and Puerto Rican) poor is monstrous. But one does not have to rest his case on this common knowledge reality; few features of the American social order have been so thoroughly, frequently, and authoritatively established as that of police brutality in general and in particular against the Black people. As we briefly spell out these authorities, one may bear in mind whom it is that Mayor Yorty, knowingly or otherwise, called Communists, dupes, and demagogues, and Chief Parker called “our international enemies.”

Exhibit One: President Herbert Hoover appointed the so-called Wickersham Commission to investigate crime

in the United States. That commission in its Report issued in 1931, pointedly referred to the prevalence of police brutality in the United States; one of its conclusions reads as follows: "Police brutality—the unnecessary use of violence to enforce the mores of segregation, to punish, and to coerce confessions—is a serious problem in the United States."

Exhibit Two: Professor Alfred McClung Lee, then chairman of the Department of Sociology at Wayne University in Detroit, and Professor Norman D. Humphrey, of the same department and university, published in 1943 their definitive study of the outbreak of that year in Detroit (*Race Riot*, New York)—in which, by the way, thirty-four people, all Black, were killed. These experts repeatedly referred to "police behavior" as a central aggravating factor (pp. 114, 115) and quoted with full approval the confidential report made by the city's head of the National Urban League, as follows: "The police behaved with deplorable stupidity and callousness" (p. 137).

Exhibit Three: In 1947 President Truman's Committee on Civil Rights made its report to him, published by the government under the title, *To Secure These Rights*. This committee devoted an entire section to "Police Brutality"; therein one may read:

We must also report more widespread and varied forms of official misconduct. These include violent physical attacks by police officers on members of minority groups, the use of third degree methods to extort confessions, and brutality against prisoners (p. 25). . . . Improper police conduct is still widespread (p. 26). . . . There is evidence of lawless police action against whites and Negroes alike, but the dominant pattern is that of race prejudice (p. 27). . . . The total picture—adding the connivance of some police officials in lynchings to their record of brutality against Negroes in other situations—is, in the opinion of this Committee, a serious reflection on American justice (p. 27).

Exhibit Four: In the *American Journal of Sociology* for July 1953, Professor W. A. Westley published a study of "Violence and the Police." This was based on interviews conducted by the author with fifty percent of the entire police force of a midwestern city containing one hundred-fifty thousand people. The professor asked these policemen when did they feel it proper "to rough a man up." Note, please, not *whether* they felt it proper, but *when*. None said they never thought it proper; the only differences appeared as to *why* those arrested should be roughed up, with the most "popular" reason being that the victim "did not show enough respect for the officer."

Exhibit Five: The well-known and widely respected author, Albert Deutsch, entitled one of the chapters in his book *The Trouble With Cops* (New York, 1955) "What Price Brutality?" Here is the concluding sentence of that work: "In many cities, north and south, Negroes and other members of minority groups are particular targets for sadists in blue."

Exhibit Six: The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, whose members were appointed by President Eisenhower, with later additions by President Kennedy, reported to the latter in 1961 and the U.S. government printed that report, in five volumes, in that year. One of those volumes (V) is entitled *Justice*; the entire second chapter of that volume is devoted to "Unlawful Police Violence," pp. 5–28. We quote from the opening page and then from the final page, as follows:

The Commission's study of the administration of justice concentrates on police brutality—the use of unlawful violence—against Negroes. Complaints and litigation suggest four subdivisions of the problem. The first involves the use of racially motivated brutality to enforce subordination or segregation. The second, a not altogether separate category, entails violence as a punishment. The third relates to coerced confessions. The last and largest entails the almost casual, or spontaneous, use

of force in arrests. . . . Negroes are the victims with disproportionate frequency.

The Commission's studies indicate that police brutality in the United States today is a serious and continuing problem in many parts of the country.

Exhibit Seven: The latest Report of the President's Commission on Civil Rights was issued in 1963; it is one relatively brief volume entitled *Civil Rights* and again published by the government. This commission noted as a serious fault "that law enforcement agencies throughout most of the nation are staffed exclusively or overwhelmingly by whites"* (p. 124). Also in this volume appears a brief report from the California Advisory Committee to the U.S. commission; this state committee tells of the public meeting that it sponsored in *Los Angeles in September 1962 devoted to the matter of "police-community relations."* It noted that this hearing was held because of reports that these relations in that city were poor and remarked that this presented "situations of great potential danger." This was three years prior to the Watts uprising. Here was the finding:

The committee found a lack of rapport between the police and the Negro community in Los Angeles. At the time of the committee's meeting in that city, Negroes appeared to feel very strongly that race was a factor in police practices and that little or no real recourse was available to victims of police abuse. This, in turn, created an atmosphere in which law enforcement was difficult.

*It did not make the point that this applies with great force to the federal government also. In the eleven Southern states there were in the federal courts 1,169 judges, commissioners, clerks, deputy clerks, attorneys, assistant attorneys, marshals, and deputy marshals. Of that total 1,155 were white; 14 were Black, and they were assistant attorneys and deputy marshals only. Of course, the state governments are utterly lily-white. See Charles Morgan, "Southern Justice," in *Look*, June 29, 1965.

Clearly, then, police brutality is a fact; it is directed especially against the Negro people and its practitioners and defenders are indeed the enemies of this Republic, of freedom, of decency; they are defilers of mankind. Having Police Chief Parker responsible for "law and order" in Watts is comparable to placing Himmler in charge of police in Tel Aviv.* The *least* that Chief Parker deserved was immediate dismissal.

An overall requirement, just to *begin* the task of curing the national defect of a corrupt, racist, brutal, and violent police force, was suggested recently by Herbert L. Packer, professor of law at Stanford and a specialist in criminal law. He wrote:

It is widely perceived today, especially among minority groups who feel most keenly the lash of unfettered police discretion, that the police are, to put it bluntly, accountable to no one but themselves. Until this is remedied, or at least until possible remedies are developed in detail, it is fruitless to argue about how much latitude the police should have in questioning suspects. No code of police practices that does not provide effective sanctions for police lawlessness can so much as begin the long repair job that will be required to win minority acceptance of even the most necessary police functions. (*New Republic*, September 4, 1965.)

It is not necessary to spell out in detail the statistics demonstrating the oppression and superexploitation of the Negro people in the United States. Some relevant facts, however, need presentation, since ruling-class circles have sought to give the impression that the mass of

*That Himmler at his worst is matched by what goes on in the United States today, where Blacks are concerned, one may read for himself in, for example: Elizabeth Sutherland, ed., *Letters from Mississippi* (New York, 1965); and especially *Mississippi Black Paper*, collected by COFO, with an introduction by Reinhold Niebuhr (New York, 1965). Again, let it be noted that of course the federal government knows all this but its inactivity is monumental.

Negroes have really won all there is to win and "what more do they want, anyway?"

Certain advances have been won through bitter struggle but most are such as to carry with them almost an insulting quality. The important achievements in the areas of civil rights and law represent, in fact, what was supposed to have been won a century ago. Important in this connection is the frequent reaction from Negro people who will not minimize the voting rights bill but will nevertheless, with full reason, express resentment that they, among all citizens, required special legislation for the recognition—not yet, the implementation*—of this elementary right.

Similarly, with the 1954 Supreme Court decision on equal rights to education, no people could value this more than the Negro people who fought bitterly for this right for generations—petitions from Negroes for equal educational rights go back to the eighteenth century. Still there is some resentment or bitterness over the fact that for *them* the assertion of this elementary right required these generations of effort and a decision from the Supreme Court.

Particular bitterness—sometimes verging dangerously close to cynicism, which in politics is next only to apathy as the most impermissible attitude—arises over the fact that the implementation of that 1954 decision has been scandalously meager. As Professor Vann Woodward pointed out, "More Negroes are attending *de facto* segre-

*Charles Evers, head of the NAACP in Jackson, Miss., and brother of the martyr, Medgar, said to Drew Pearson (syndicated column dated September 1, 1965) who had asked how registration of new voters was progressing: "There are only four registrars in the entire state of Mississippi. Four registrars for four counties . . . there are 82 counties in Mississippi and in not one are five per cent of the Negroes registered. Yet they send only four registrars for the entire state." Pearson concludes quite correctly: "Thus, while it was known last winter that the Negro voting rights bill was sure to pass, the Administration did nothing about preparing to put it in operation."

gated schools now than when the Supreme Court handed down its decision in 1954" (*New York Times Magazine*, August 29, 1965).

Whitney M. Young, Jr., emphasizes:

Having fought the issue to the highest court in the land and seen the decision given in their favor, Negroes then experienced the most shameless perversion of justice. In state after state and school district after school district, human ingenuity was employed to defy the clear statement of the court. And where elusive action failed to nullify the court decision, violence, intimidation, legislative evasion, and even assassination, were employed (*To Be Equal*, New York, 1964, p. 244).

In the face of this, Negroes are berated for lawlessness—often by the same individuals who engineered the perversion or violation of laws mentioned by Mr. Young!

But in decisive areas of life—especially those areas which affect most Black people and affect them most significantly—the past decade has witnessed either relative, or even absolute, worsening of conditions. In unemployment the situation is worse today, absolutely and relative to whites, than ten years ago. In family income the Black has witnessed a relative decline compared with white families since the mid-Fifties. In education, as we already have noted, segregation in fact is more widespread now than in 1954. And, above all, in housing, the past decade has witnessed a steep deterioration absolutely and relatively for the Negro people. They live today in more crowded circumstances than ten years ago, they pay higher rents than ten years ago, their ghettos are more fully segregated today than ten years ago. The situation in housing is so bad and its significance is so great that this deserves some development, even if necessarily very brief.

Whitney Young, in a speech delivered in Birmingham

in September 1962, warned that projecting figures then available showed that about 85 percent of the Black population would be living in major urban centers, mainly in the North, by 1975, and, on the basis of what was occurring then in the various "relocation" and so-called "slum-clearance" projects, he said that these millions "face the specter of becoming more segregated, not less segregated in the unattractive areas of the cities which remain educationally, culturally, and socially substandard." The urban planning expert, Howard Moody, in his *The City: Metropolis or New Jerusalem* (1963), warned:

A city is dying when it has an eye for real estate value but has lost its heart for personal values, when it has an understanding of traffic flow but little concern about the flow of human beings, when we have increasing competence in building but less and less time for housing and ethical codes, when human values are absent at the heart of the city's decision-making, planning, and the execution of its plans in processes like relocation.

The fullest and most recent official study of the question of housing as it affects minority peoples, especially Black and Puerto Rican peoples, was that made in July 1963 by the Connecticut Advisory Committee of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (reprinted in the *Congressional Record*, August 31, 1965). This study showed "that such integrated communities . . . as existed prior to relocation were rarely preserved during the process and that, more often, a polarization took place." Relocation, then, "accelerated the trend toward racially segregated neighborhoods and schools," and the homes into which the families were forced to move had "the poorest kind of tenant-management relations . . . extremely poor living conditions prevailed; brusque treatment of tenants by public housing officials was common." Furthermore,

"the rent paid . . . varied directly with their race. . . . On the average, white respondents paid less for rentals than did Negroes, and Puerto Ricans averaged higher rentals than either of the other groups."

The Journal of the American Institute of Planners (November 1964) published a detailed study of "The Housing of Relocated Families," by Chester Hartman of the MIT-Harvard Joint Center for Urban Studies. Here we simply indicate its conclusions: after relocation the majority of the rehoused—as many as two-thirds—still live in substandard homes, often with "an increase in incidence of overcrowding"; "relocation may be resulting in a 'rich get richer, poor get poorer' effect"; "only one-half of one per cent of the \$2.2 billion of gross project costs for all federally-aided urban renewal projects (through 1960) was spent on relocation." And non-whites through the relocation process are "forced to pay high rents."

The intensification of segregated housing and of the ghetto pattern in the United States was demonstrated in great statistical detail—comparing 1940 with 1960—by Karl E. and Alma F. Taeuber of the University of Wisconsin in a paper published in the January 1965 issue of the *American Journal of Sociology*. As we have indicated, all evidence shows that this pattern of increased segregation discernible from 1940 to 1960 has been intensified in the past five years.

Daniel M. Friedenberg, himself president of several New York real estate corporations, in a sensational article in the *Saturday Evening Post* (August 28, 1965), has shown that "Slum Clearance Is a Hoax." The federal program for urban housing, he writes, "has spawned corruption, produced gushers of profits for promoters and giant corporations, and pushed slum dwellers into worse pigsties." Writes Mr. Friedenberg: "As a builder and manager of apartment houses I am familiar with the

basic problems involved in urban renewal: high rents, created by high land and construction costs, discriminate against the displaced poor more than any deliberate racial or ethnic policy." Friedenberg reports that "of all the housing the Federal Housing Authority has financed, only 1½ per cent has been for people with an annual income under \$5,000"; hence, he concludes that the federal activities in housing "to a large extent remain devices for rich builders to get richer erecting housing and cultural and financial institutions for the upper middle class, whereas the poor will be kicked out and forced into worse slums."*

In no sense am I to be understood as presenting the data on the oppression of the Negro people as a kind of Myrdalian—or, now, Moynihanian—excuse for that very oppression. That is, there has been developing for the past twenty-five years, especially in liberal and reform circles, the adoption of a socially induced inferiority concept to "explain" the oppression of Black people. This thesis gained currency as the biologically inferior fraud became more and more exposed, and less and less tenable in sophisticated circles.

The white commercial press—particularly the less openly reactionary elements of that press—is filled these days with "explanations" for the unemployment rate, the mortality rate, the minimal education, the high rate of arrests and convictions, and so on, as applicable to the Negro people because of the impact upon them of the ghetto. The elements which together make ghetto living—poverty, bad housing, high unemployment, and

*See Charles Abrams' foreword to the volume *Equality* (New York, 1965) containing essays by R. L. Carter, D. Kenyon, P. Marcuse, and L. Miller for illustrations showing how state and federal governments—by omission and commission—are intensifying jim crow housing in the United States.

all the rest of the torment—are spelled out in gory detail and this detail is offered as an "explanation" for the existence of the ghetto!

One finds repeated references to "the social cancer of the deprived Negro"—as from Roscoe Drummond in the *Washington Post*, August 20, 1965. That is, the Negro is the cancer and not the system of jim crow that produces the deprivation!

The speech delivered June 4, 1965, by President Johnson at Howard University—based, as we have since been told, on the widely publicized "secret" memorandum prepared under the direction of Daniel Moynihan when he was an Under-Secretary of Labor—is filled with this approach. The core of the analysis was not that the Black was biologically inferior—that was rejected—but, rather, that he has been *made* inferior. The President used the word "crippled" three times in describing the Negro people. Where they weren't crippled they were "hobbled" and where they weren't hobbled they were "battered" and where they weren't battered they were "twisted" and if they weren't twisted they suffered "infirmities" and where they didn't suffer infirmities they were subject to "decay" and if decay was not enough they were also "blighted" and if being blighted was not enough they also were "damaged" and if being damaged was still not enough they were in "despair" and not only in despair but also "indifferent" and not just indifferent but afflicted with "degradation."

The advantage of this kind of "analysis," which is so one-sided that to call it untrue is mild, is that, being miles off in disclosing cause, it helps one to propose programs that at best smell of case work or patchwork and at worst repeatedly and bravely "admit" to "not knowing" why, and therefore unfortunately being uncertain as to what to do about it.

One may get from extreme oppression a Bigger

Thomas—this can and does happen to all peoples—but the Afro-American people is not Bigger Thomas and the most discerning contemporary critics of Richard Wright's *Native Son*—such as Benjamin J. Davis and W. E. B. Du Bois—stressed that fact. Of course, Richard Wright was correct in insisting that the real criminal in the case of a Bigger Thomas is not he but is the class dominating the society that produced him, but that was fuzzy in the novel and especially in the way the novel was used.

Oppression carries with it suffering and oppression victimizes—of course. But is it necessary to reaffirm in a nation that is supposed to have Judeo-Christian roots that suffering may and often does ennoble? Is it not clear that while oppression victimizes, the one who suffers is not *simply* a victim? Is he not also a human being who, *therefore*, resents and rejects and battles against the attempted dehumanization?

This, really, is the whole point of the Watts uprising. And this is how one evaluates that uprising, as to which side one is on? It is not the slave who is degraded, it is the slaveowner; it is not the workingman who is degraded, it is the exploiting boss; it is not the "native" who is degraded, but the colonial overlord. This is true not only historically, so to speak—it is true in terms of people: people who work and people who work others; people who create and people who simply consume; people who produce and people who exploit.

Indeed, the morally superior condition and position of the Afro-American people for centuries and their present morally superior position has made of them, in my opinion, a superior people. I do not mean genetically or biologically, of course, but morally, in terms of values and in terms of warmth, comradeship, courtesy, thoughtfulness, determination, perception, endurance. Symbolic

of the Afro-American are the greatest Americans of the last two centuries: Frederick Douglass and W. E. B. Du Bois. And if this nation is to survive as a nation having human values at all, it will be largely because of the qualities, as well as the necessities, of the Afro-American people.

What is the basic revolutionary and liberating quality that Marx emphasized in the working class? In that class, he wrote in 1844, was "a sphere of society which has a universal character because its sufferings are universal, and which does not claim a *particular redress* because the wrong which is done it is not a *particular* wrong but wrong in general." And the next year he wrote that the class moves toward fundamental change, toward revolutionizing society, "to which it is forced by the contradiction between its *humanity* and its situation, which is an open, clear and absolute negation of its humanity."*

The vast majority of the over twenty million Negroes are working people and they constitute the heart of the most exploited segment of the American working class as a whole. Increasingly, that class character of the people's liberation effort is coming to the fore; the imaginative, more and more uncompromising, militant character of the effort reflects this class composition and its increasing weight in action. That will continue to mount.

More and more this must activate the working class as a whole; as increasingly it will itself raise more basic demands and demands of a more and more universal scope—*i.e.*, peace, anti-imperialism, and attacks upon bad housing in general, bad education in general, unemployment in general, inadequate health facilities in gen-

*The first quotation is from the "Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right"; the second, from *The Holy Family*. Italics as in original.

eral, antimonopoly in general, and so on. The demands of the Black movement are in fact taking on a greater structural character; increasingly, ideas of socialism and Marxism come to the fore, notwithstanding everything.

Increasingly, too, wider elements among the white population are grasping the central character of the Negro struggle; the youth, the intelligentsia, groups in the trade unions, the peace workers, many church organizations. As they see the interconnection they see also the need for deeper analysis and more fundamental, more independent, more antimonopoly effort; among such groups, also, the interest in Marxism is growing. Indeed, I think it is a fact that not in thirty years have so many Americans been studying so seriously and so eagerly the Marxian outlook.

The Right is seeking feverishly to make capital of the mounting Black militancy, to twist it into something fearful and something threatening to white people and to the nation as a whole. The Right always has seen how crucial is racism and Negro oppression to them; I am not sure that those opposed to the Right have seen this with equal clarity. To beat back the Right then is an additional reason for utmost boldness and confidence and struggle in the area of Black freedom.

Increasingly, the Negro movement will move front and center athwart basic socioeconomic and labor and peace-or-war questions. This does not mean that legal battles and civil rights struggles are passé. On the contrary, in the next ten years really qualitative leaps can be made and I think will be made in the *implementation* of the gains made in these areas and that will help transform political life in this country. It is not a matter of posing one (the politicolegal) against the other (the socioeconomic-labor). It is, rather, seeing how they complement each other and how struggles for the second, with the first as a base, will move ever more clearly to the forefront.

In this, Du Bois was again a pioneer. It was this, in fact, which was basic to his leaving the NAACP in the mid-Thirties. He wanted his kind of orientation program in that organization but with the leadership as it then existed he could not get it, so he left. And in the Cold War period, in the last twelve or fifteen years of his life, he was turning to this message more and more. Thus, for example, when he was eighty-five, in 1953, he toured the nation and delivered many times a paper into which he had put extraordinary effort and thought; he called it "On the Future of the American Negro."*

This brings me to the crux of my message. We Negroes are not fighting tonight against slavery. That fight is won. We are now not fighting in vain for the ballot. We hold the balance of power in the north, and either we get the vote in the south or we come north and get it here. But we are fighting desperately the economic battle for the right to work and to get from our work food, housing, education, health, and a chance to live as human beings. But in this fight we are not alone. With us stand and must stand whether they will or no, the white workers of America and of the world.

It was this kind of emphasis and this insight that brought him, of course, into the Communist Party.

Rev. Malcolm Boyd, writing in *The Christian Century* (September 8, 1965), insisted that the idea that the Black freedom movement had been harmed by the Watts uprising—as so many were hopefully saying, from *Time* magazine to the *Wall Street Journal*—was wrong. On the contrary, he wrote: "The massive expression of Negro frustration served to unify large numbers of oppressed people hitherto fragmented. There is a new determination to achieve total, not token, freedom."

A new understanding and a new initiative for action must now come from masses of white people. The first

*Full text is in H. Aptheker, ed., "Some Unpublished Writings of W. E. B. Du Bois," *Freedomways*, V (Winter 1965), No. 1; the quoted matter is from p. 123

steps were taken by the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor early in September 1965, one month after the uprising, in urging the building trades to integrate and to construct a new Watts. Its official organ reacted to the uprising with a front-page eight-column editorial headline—A TIME FOR ACTION TO AVERT ANOTHER BLOOD BATH—and the kind of action called for was rebuilding, adding hospitals and schools and altering hiring policies. That's a good *beginning*. A meeting of Black leaders held the same time in Los Angeles demanded a really massive effort to eliminate poverty in America and thus the physical groundwork of jim crow. Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett, the San Francisco physician, newspaper publisher, and peace leader, demanded a fifteen billion-dollar slum clearance project as a start.

The *New York Times* urged editorially that no one must "dawdle now" for all have received at Watts "a catastrophic warning." The *New York Post* similarly reacted, "We dare not delay." The *Christian Century* was more graphic; it editorially held: "The nation must now with its full strength relieve the plight of the Negroes in urban slums or turn its metropolises into garrisoned cities." A valid insight since a reactionary, violent, and aggressive policy toward colored peoples abroad threatens a garrison state at home; and such a policy against the Black people here threatens a similar disaster.

The Catholic weekly, *Commonweal*, was most pointed of all. After Watts it said (September 3, 1965): "If the white man does not grasp the underlying pattern of racial explosions very quickly, he is doomed to many, many more." What the Negro is calling for, says this influential paper, is "a thorough social reconstruction"—"jobs to go with votes, housing space to go with fair housing laws, decent education to go with integrated classrooms."

We are coming down the stretch in this country; we are

reaching the point of put up or shut up. Watts was an historic cry of alarm; smashing of drums; blasting of trumpets. He who has not awakened now is dead.

Frederick Douglass, a little more than a decade after he had himself fled slavery, said in 1850 (and we need now just change his word *slavery* to our word *racism*.):*

The existence of slavery in this country brands your republicanism as a sham, your humanity as a base pretense, and your Christianity as a lie. It destroys your moral power abroad; it corrupts your politicians at home. It saps the foundations of religion; it makes your name a hissing and a bye-word to a mocking earth. . . . It fetters your progress; it is the enemy of improvement; the deadly foe of education; it fosters pride; it breeds insolence; it promotes vice; it shelters crime; it is a curse to the earth that supports it; and yet you cling to it as if it were the sheet anchor of all your hopes. Oh! be warned! be warned! . . . crush and destroy it forever!

And finally, Du Bois, writing "Of the Sorrow Songs," and closing his great book, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903):

In His good time America shall rend the Veil and the prisoned shall go free. Free, free as the sunshine tracking down the morning into these high windows of mine, free as yonder fresh young voices welling up to me from the caverns of brick and mortar below—swelling with song, instinct with life, tremulous treble and darkening bass. My children, my little children, are singing to the sunshine, and thus they sing:

*Let us cheer the wea-ry trav-el-er . . .
Cheer the wea-ry trav-el-er. Let us
cheer the wear-ry trav-el-er A-
long the heav-en-ly way.*

*P. S. Foner, ed., *Frederick Douglass: Selections from His Writings*, (New York, 1945), p. 52.

And the traveler girds himself, and sets his face toward the Morning, and goes his way.

Inspired by Douglass and Du Bois, and fighting as they fought, this generation can accomplish the crushing of racism and thus save this nation; let us gird ourselves, set our faces, and do it.

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« XVII »

Vietnam, Racism, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Now that A. J. Muste has died, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is *the* outstanding spokesman for classical Christian values in the United States. For several years he has been the preeminent leader of the civil rights movement; his decisive contributions to the theory and practice of peace have been recognized with the Nobel Peace Prize.

As Du Bois picked up the torch from the hands of Douglass, so it seems likely that future historians will conclude that King has carried forward the torch from Du Bois. The torch has exposed the same enemies and lighted up the way to the same fundamental goals: in the hands of Douglass in the nineteenth century, and Du Bois in the first half of the twentieth century, and now King as we approach the twenty-first century, the evils of racism, colonialism, aggressive war have been exposed, and values of equality, national sovereignty, and peace illuminated.

In so exposing and so illuminating, Dr. King follows and extends the fundamental traditions of the Afro-American people; and in insisting upon the palpable connection between racism and colonialism, and between racism and colonialism and aggressive warfare, Dr. King also is reaffirming a basic insight characterizing the finest expressions of those traditions. Of course, Dr. King is not advocating the merging of organizations and

institutions fighting on specific fronts, as for civil rights and for peace; each front needs its own specific organizational forms and Dr. King requires lessons in this from no one. Dr. King is insisting on the interconnection between such movements and is insisting that comprehending that *fact* and acting in accordance with it helps both movements.

Specifically, Dr. King has done two particular things most recently and both have brought him considerable condemnation from such "best friends" as the *Washington Post* and from some within the civil rights movement, both Black and white. First, he has unequivocally condemned the present U.S. war upon the people of Vietnam as illegal, immoral, unjust, and contrary to the best interests of the American people; second, he has affirmed that that war damages the cause of civil rights and that no one, therefore, who cares for the latter can or should remain aloof from expressing his opposition to the former.

Some condemn Dr. King for attacking the Vietnam war although, very significantly, almost no Black person has joined in this aspect of the assault; more—and here certain Black people are included—condemn him on the ground that his insisting on the connection between that war and the civil rights movement is erroneous or, at least, tactically unwise. This latter point is bolstered by insisting that such concern about the interconnection between injustice at home and unjust action abroad, between demand for equal treatment of all citizens and concern for equal treatment of all nations and nationalities, between aggressive foreign policies and regressive domestic policies—that all this is somehow unprecedented and unusual and if for no other reason disquieting and harmful to the struggle for civil rights itself.

The fact is that in condemning an unjust war *while it is being waged* Dr. King is pursuing a deeply imbedded

tradition in Afro-American history; and in pointing to the relationship between such a war and the retardation of the Negro people's movement for freedom, Dr. King is carrying forward in our time a basic element in that history.

Dr. King, in dealing with the Vietnam war, says, for example:

We are in an untenable position morally and politically. We are left standing before the world glutted by our own barbarity. We are engaged in a war that seeks to turn the clock of history back and perpetuate white colonialism (speech in Chicago, March 25, 1967).

Evaluating the war, Dr. King urges its immediate cessation, the termination at once of U.S. bombings, and the return of American troops. Compare Dr. King's castigation of the role and policy of the present administration in Vietnam and his suggested alternative, to the words of Frederick Douglass and *his* suggested alternative, having in mind the administration of Polk and the war then being waged by the U.S. government against Mexico. In January 1848 Douglass, in his Rochester newspaper *The North Star*, wrote of "the present disgraceful, cruel, and iniquitous war . . . grasping ambition, tyrannic usurpation, atrocious aggression, cruel and haughty pride." And he continued: "We beseech our countrymen to leave off this horrid conflict, abandon their murderous plans, and forsake the way of blood. . . . Let petitions flood the halls of Congress by the million, asking for the recall of our forces."

When Dr. King points to the connection between unjust and aggressive wars and the poison of racism, he certainly is on sound historical grounds. Clearly, the origins of racism can be traced to the beginnings of West European rapacity toward Africa. Aggression against the peoples of that continent, later reinforced by aggressions against those in Asia and those originally inhabiting the

New World, brought the rationalization of racism. Furthermore, the intensified aggressions of nineteenth-century industrial and monopoly capitalism, reflected in the rise of British, French, Spanish, German, Dutch, Italian—and American—empires, were associated with and rationalized by chauvinism; Kipling's *White Man's Burden* was written in 1899.

All of this was comprehended at once by Negro leadership in the United States and was insisted upon by that leadership; indeed, all people, white and Black, who were associated in the civil rights movement from its earliest beginnings, emphasized the relationship between colonialism, imperialism, aggressive wars, and the condition of Afro-Americans.

After the betrayal of Reconstruction, the crushing of Populism, and the consolidation of holdings in the West and South, monopoly capital in the United States turned seriously to overseas expansion. War with Spain was precipitated and as a result Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Philippines, and Guam were seized. The people of these islands resisted the appropriation, and fighting against Spain and against these peoples continued from 1898 through 1902. Leaders and organizations of Black people in the United States opposed these wars, openly sided with the raped island masses, and emphasized the relationship between these wars and their own condition within the country.

Thus a leading Black paper of the period, the *Richmond Planet*, warned in 1898 that "the American Negro cannot become the ally of imperialism without enslaving his own race." The next year the Colored National League issued an *Open Letter to President McKinley*, calling upon the President "to pause in pursuit of your national policy of criminal aggression abroad to consider the criminal aggression of home against humanity and American citizenship, which is in full tide of successful conquest of the South."

Frederick Douglass was dead, but his son Lewis, a Civil War veteran, denounced the war and the conquest of colonies. The President, Lewis Douglass said in 1899, promises the Filipinos and Puerto Ricans "a government of liberty" but he knows that "whatever the U.S. government controls, there injustice to dark races prevails"; he knows that "the expansion of the United States means extension of race hate and cruelty, barbarous lynchings and the grossest injustices." Douglass' son-in-law, Nathan W. Sprague, resigned in 1899 from the Maryland Committee of the Republican party in protest against imperialism. He said the United States left "millions of American-born citizens to be lynched and burned at the stake saying they have no power to prohibit such crimes, and yet this Administration feels justified in forcing a warped civilization upon the Filipinos."

A Negro Republican newspaper, the *Philadelphia Recorder*, held in January 1900 that the so-called "pacification" of the Philippines was a farce and a tragedy and that "those who have the spirit of independence and human liberty in their breast are called traitors if they raise their voices against this diabolic outrage."

When there was talk in the summer of 1900 of sending Afro-American troops to help suppress the Chinese people's anticolonialist uprising—the so-called "Boxer Rebellion"—the Reverend Henry M. Turner of Georgia, Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, said: "This is not our war, and the black man that puts a gun upon his shoulder to go and fight China should find the bottom of the ocean before he gets there."

It was in 1900 that Du Bois propounded his observation that "the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line," enunciated in the address he drafted for the first Pan-African Conference held in London. The general secretary of that conference was a West Indian barrister, H. Sylvester-Williams, and its president was Bishop Alexander Walters of the AME Zion Church; Du

Bois was, of course, a prime founder of the NAACP a decade later, and Bishop Walters was also among the pioneers in creating that organization. Both clearly saw from the earliest years of their careers the interconnection between the movement of the Afro-American people and the efforts of all colored peoples to extirpate colonialism; both saw the oppression of the Negro as basic to violence within the United States, and the existence of colonialism as fundamental to violence outside the United States and as a prime source of international wars.

The interpenetration of the struggles of the oppressed of the earth was a central theme in the "Address to the Country," issued in 1906 (and written by Du Bois) by the young Niagara Movement—a basic constituent three years later for the birth of the NAACP. "Courage, brothers," said this 1906 manifesto. "The battle for humanity is not lost or losing. The Slav is rising in his might, the yellow millions are tasting liberty, the black Africans are writhing toward the light, and everywhere the laborer, with ballot in his hand, is voting open the gates of Opportunity and Peace."

The international ramifications of racism, the global implications of the indignities heaped upon Black people within the United States, and the connections of both with the system of colonialism and the fact of aggressive and unjust wars, all were organic to the creation of the NAACP. This was true not only in terms of Du Bois and Walters, of the Niagara Movement and the beginnings of Pan Africanism. It was true of many other key figures in the early history of the NAACP and in the activities of that organization for most of its life.

Thus the internationalism and pacifism of Oswald Garrison Villard are well known; other founders of the NAACP—Jane Addams, Stephen S. Wise, John Milholland, Charles Edward Russell, Florence Kelley, William English Walling, Mary White Ovington—were all anti-imperialist as well as antiracist, and most of them were

also socialists. Perhaps the most dramatic exemplification of the connection between anti-imperialism and the NAACP—apart from Du Bois—was Moorfield Storey.

Storey, in his youth secretary to Senator Sumner and later among the most distinguished attorneys of Massachusetts—and a president of the American Bar Association—was a leading anti-imperialist beginning in 1898. Storey was, in fact, president of the American Anti-Imperialist League from 1905 to 1920 and president of the NAACP from its commencement in 1910 until his death in 1929.

If one would substitute names more appropriate for the present moment, he would find little else requiring change in reading some of the correspondence of this founding president of the NAACP. Thus, in a letter dated June 27, 1899, Storey contended:

As was said of slavery, so may we say of the attempt to subjugate the Philippines, if it "is not wrong, nothing is wrong," . . . If Spain was wrong in trying to subdue Cubans and Filipinos, our country is not right in carrying on the work. . . . Since this ruthless war is wrong, it should stop. If we had no right to begin, we have no right to continue. There is no room at the bar of morals for the argument that, because we have embarked on a career of crime, we must persevere. . . . Nor is any man who is opposing this crime to be frightened by names. The "traitor" is not he who is seeking to keep his country true to her highest ideals—who is fighting to save her from ruinous folly.

And, in a letter dated October 1, 1905, having reference to the course of colonialism upon which the United States was by then well embarked, Storey held: "I feel that it is also responsible for the reaction at home against the Negroes, and that the longer we persist in it, the worse must be the consequences to Filipinos and Americans alike."⁷

Some may be surprised to learn that Booker T. Wash

ington also recognized the worldwide relationship of subordinate status for peoples of color; that he, too, warned of the perverting impact of warmaking. Here, for instance, is a paragraph from a speech delivered by Washington on May Day 1913 in St. Louis before the Fourth American Peace Congress; let the reader consider if this might not well have been uttered yesterday by Dr. King:

A nation cannot teach its youth to think in terms of destruction and oppression without brutalizing and blunting the tender conscience and sense of justice of the youths of that country. More and more we must learn to think not in terms of race or color or language or religion or of political boundaries, but in terms of humanity. Above all races and political boundaries there is humanity.²

In May 1917, one month after the United States had entered World War I, a conference of all leading Black organizations was held in Washington; the NAACP played a leading role in organizing this meeting. A resolution adopted reads:

We trace the real cause of this World War to the despising of the darker races by the dominant groups of men, and the consequent fierce rivalry among European nations in their effort to use darker and backward people for purposes of selfish gain regardless of the ultimate good of the oppressed. We see permanent peace only in the extension of the principle of government by the consent of the governed, not simply among the smaller nations of Europe, but among the natives of Asia and Africa, the Western Indies and the Negroes of the United States.³

While Du Bois was an executive officer of the NAACP and editor of its *Crisis*, the NAACP gave him official leave of absence and a modest appropriation of funds to assist the Pan-African Movement. These leaves and grants occurred four times: 1919, with the conference meeting in London, Paris, and Brussels; 1921, in Paris;

1923, in London and Lisbon; and 1927, in New York City (with Mrs. A. W. Hunton playing a leading role).⁴

In 1920 the board of the NAACP voted to send its two chief secretaries, James Weldon Johnson and Herbert Seligmann, to Haiti to investigate U.S. military intervention and presence there. The reports made by this official NAACP delegation—especially as published in *The Nation*—created a sensation and played a significant role in the elections of November 1920.

Following that visit, James Weldon Johnson, as executive secretary of the NAACP, helped found the Union Patriotique d'Haiti to work for the restoration of the island's full independence. Stenio Vincent, later president of Haiti, was president of that patriotic society and, while filling this "subversive" post, Vincent used the headquarters of the NAACP as his own office.⁵

In 1931 Walter White, on behalf of the NAACP, again investigated—and denounced—U.S. intervention and colonialism in Haiti.

During and immediately after World War II, expressions of the worldwide ramifications of the position of the Afro-American, of the connection between efforts to prevent war and to smash jim crow, came from the entire leadership of the Black people. Indeed, during that war, Roy Wilkins himself wrote:

The tremendous surges of the peoples of Russia and Asia and Africa may prove more powerful than tanks or guns. The urgent necessity for the building of a peace between the Western Powers and the rest of the world, founded upon respect for the peoples outside the Anglo-American fold, will be a spur not to be lightly evaluated. Such a peace, in a shrunken world, could not avoid affecting the status of the Negro minority in our country.⁶

It is sometimes forgotten that the March-on-Washington movement was one which projected a worldwide struggle against racism and colonialism and in-

sisted on the essential oneness of that effort. This movement, in which all leading Black organizations participated—including the NAACP and the Urban League—projected a World Congress of Colored Peoples. Its leader, A. Philip Randolph, said that the movement considered the fight for a free Africa and India and China and in fact “the struggle for the freedom of the common man everywhere” as integral to its own purposes.

The developments and high hopes of World War II made it possible and necessary for the NAACP to ask Du Bois to return to its ranks, and in September 1944 he again took up important leadership and research duties with it, after an exile at Atlanta University that had lasted ten years.

On September 11, 1944, the board of directors of the NAACP adopted a resolution to be sent by telegram to President Roosevelt. The resolution noted that when Allied forces liberated areas in Europe those areas were returned at once to government by the peoples and nationals inhabiting them; but it observed with alarm that the same process was not followed when continental and insular areas of Africa and Asia were concerned. On the contrary, such areas were turned over to the tender mercies of those colonial powers that had earlier ruled them. Said the board of directors of the NAACP: “It is imperative that the Allies now take positive action toward self-determination for colonial peoples as a goal which must be achieved before peace is truly secure.” That board petitioned the President

to make clear now that the United States Government will not be a party to the perpetuation of colonial exploitation of any nation; that, on the contrary, the United States Government is utterly opposed and will make that opposition clear . . . to any policy which means freedom for white people or any part of the white people of the earth on the one hand, and continued exploitation of colored peoples, on the other. We ask that it be

made clear that the United States will not in any fashion, direct or indirect, uphold continued exploitation of India, China, Abyssinia and other African areas, the West Indies, or of any other part of the world.⁷

A month later Du Bois, together with George Padmore in London, called the very significant Fifth Pan-African Congress held in Manchester, England, early in 1945; a congress in which leaders of the African liberation movement—and several future heads of state—and leaders of peoples of color from the western hemisphere consulted together and did so in full recognition of the essential unity of their efforts.

The NAACP appointed Du Bois and its executive secretary, Walter White, as its official representatives to serve as consultants in San Francisco at the 1945 founding meeting of the United Nations. These consultants were dismayed at the fact that the United States tended to ignore questions of colonialism and racism and both of them insisted that such avoidance of central issues would mean a continuation of jim crow in the United States and wars and threats of wars in the world.

Walter White was now convinced, as he writes in his autobiography, of the “*increasing importance to world peace of the problem of racial minorities, and the inextricability of all race hatreds, one from another.*”⁸ Soon after the founding meeting of the UN closed, he urged President Truman to call “another international conference to deal specifically with the problem of colonialism and human rights,” but the President chose not to do so.

Stimulated by similar considerations, the National Negro Congress issued the first *Appeal to the World* in 1946; this document, presented to the United Nations, insisted that jim crow violated the covenant on human rights and constituted a threat to peace. The next year the NAACP issued a book-length *Appeal*, with similar themes, edited by Du Bois and presented as a petition to

the UN. That same year the NAACP took the lead in forming the American Committee for West Indian Freedom, again on the theory of the inextricability of racist oppression.

The launching of the Cold War, 1946-1947, resulted in abrupt changes within the NAACP, as in the CIO and other mass organizations. Red baiting, witch hunting—soon to culminate in McCarthyism—became the order of the day. Du Bois was summarily removed from the NAACP, and now the battle against colonialism and racism and war became more and more suspect—"subversive" and "un-American." What had been proper and needful in 1944 and 1945 still seemed to Du Bois in the Peace Information Center in 1949, and to William L. Patterson at the Civil Rights Congress (with its historic "We Charge Genocide," presented to the UN in Paris in 1951), and to Paul Robeson and W. A. Hunton at the Council for African Affairs, at least as proper and as needful in the teeth of the Cold War, the Korean War, and a threatening World War III.

That Du Bois was handcuffed and tried, that Patterson was jailed, that Hunton was jailed, that Robeson was boycotted and finally hounded from the country, that Benjamin J. Davis and Henry Winston and many other Communists were jailed, and that the Rosenbergs were electrocuted and Morton Sobell entombed, and that the McCarthyite blight and terror fell full blast upon the nation did not prove that colonialism and racism were not related, that aggressive war and intensified domestic reaction were not conjoined; on the contrary.

And when Robeson and Du Bois continued to insist on these relationships and to denounce war, as they did in the 1950s, they were acting truly and continuing the best traditions of their own people. And now that Patterson and Winston continue to insist on these truths and hundreds of thousands also see the same truths, perhaps in different forms or with differing emphases, this reflects

not a break with the traditional tactics and insights of the Black liberation movement but rather an application and an extension of them.

That Julian Bond and Stokely Carmichael, Floyd McKissick and Muhammed Ali, Lincoln Lynch and the Reverend James Bevel*—and the Nobel Peace Prize winner, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—see the war against the Vietnamese people as hideous and racist and contrary to the interests of Black people in the United States—and all other producing people in the United States—reflects appreciation of reality and the courage to express it; both the appreciation and the courage have typified the Afro-American people throughout their history.

Dr. King speaks the truth: "We have escalated the war in Vietnam and de-escalated the skirmish against poverty. It challenges the imagination to contemplate what lives we could transform if we were to cease killing."

These words of his are worthy of Douglass and Du Bois; they come out of the blood and bone of the Black people in the United States:

We are on the side of the wealthy and secure while we create a hell for the poor. Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home and death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as an American to the leaders of my own nation. The great initiative in this war is ours. The initiative to stop it must be ours.

Of course, Dr. King is not calling for the merging of the civil rights and peace movements. Of course, the struggle

*One must add today the entire roster of the heroic Black Panther Party, led by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale.

against racism has had, does have, and must have its own organizational forms and its own specific campaigns and platforms and strategies.

But when Dr. King denounces unjust and aggressive wars he is acting in the grand tradition of this nation's noblest souls and in the tradition of the finest Negro men and women of the past. When Dr. King insists upon the connection between aggressive foreign policy and regressive domestic policy he insists upon what is true and consequential. When Dr. King points to the racism common in colonialism and in jim crow he points to that which is historically demonstrable. When Dr. King affirms that the present war in Vietnam threatens all democratic and progressive advances in the United States and does so for economic, political, ethical, and psychological reasons, again he is saying what every fact and every day's events confirm. Hence Dr. King, precisely as a leader in the struggle against jim crow and against the ghetto, must be—and is—a leader in the struggle against war. Above all, today in the United States, central to social advance is combating racism and central to social advance is ending the Vietnam atrocity and changing U.S. foreign policy. These are inextricably bound together; to separate them is to falsify each and to weaken the effort on each front. To see the connection is not to deny the great consequence of each in its own right but, rather, to make more effective the struggle to bring about both equality and peace.

This, surely, is written large in the history of the Afro-American people.

* This essay was written in April 1967, exactly one year prior to the assassination of Dr. King. One should note that by 1969 the NAACP had adopted a position toward the Vietnam war very much like that of the late Dr. King. *

Chapter i

1. This paper may be consulted in U. B. Phillips, *The Course of the South to Secession* (New York, 1939). The quote is from p. 152.
2. Of the recent white Southern writers, Professor C. Vann Woodward comes closest to a full rejection of the Phillipsian thesis. In his invaluable studies *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (New York, 1938) and *Origins of the New South* (1951), he demonstrates the class cleavages characterized Southern white society in the post-Civil War epoch, but even there does not break fully with Phillips. He comes closest to such a break in his *Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York, 1955), but again pulls away at the last moment: "This is not to contend," he writes (p. 6), "that the Negro's status has been what one historian has called 'the central theme' or basic determinant of Southern history. There is in fact an impressive amount of evidence indicating that the Negro's status and changes therein have been the product of more impersonal forces. . . . In fixing upon the Negro's status and race relations, therefore, I am not advancing a theory of historical causation, but adopting common usage in characterizing the successive phases of Southern history."

While discussing Woodward, a point must be made of the fact that in the latter book he presents the Afro-American in the conventionally docile and passive role. For example, he refers to "the resigned compliance of the Negro" (p. 8), to "the Negro [who] became confused and politically apathetic" (p. 41), to the Negro as "cowed and intimidated" (p. 69). This represents a retreat from his earlier works; it is to be hoped it is only temporary.

3. J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth*, (Raleigh, 1909), 2 vols. II, 1154-1156. The letter is dated Raleigh, Feb. 16, 1868, and is addressed to William Clark.
4. *A History of Transportation in the Eastern Cotton Belt* (New York, 1908).

5. (New York, 1934), III 108-109.
6. A good expression of this viewpoint is Howard W. Odum, *The Way of the South* (New York, 1947). The quotes are from pp. 294, 312-313.

Chapter ii

1. In his important book, *The Southern Heritage* (New York, 1958).
2. The fullest collection of such statements—from Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish religious bodies—will be found in the work by two Southern white professors, E. Q. Campbell and T. F. Pettigrew, *Christians in Racial Crisis* (Washington, 1959), pp. 137-170.
3. In early Chinese and Indian civilizations something approaching modern racism does seem to have existed. See David B. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca, 1966), pp. 51-52; in general, however, Davis notes an "absence of racial prejudice in the ancient world" (pp. 49-50).
4. This is treated at length in my *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York, 1943), pp. 53-78.
5. The present writer published a critique of this work under the title, *The Negro People in America* (New York, 1946).

Chapter iii

1. The data are accurately presented in Francis L. Broderick, "The Academic Training of W. E. B. Du Bois," *Journal of Negro Education*, XXVII (Winter 1958), 10-16.
2. Charles H. Wesley, "Racial Propaganda and Historical Writing," *Opportunity*, XIII (Aug. 1935), 244-246, 254. The quoted words occur on p. 246. Wesley added that Du Bois was "the literary knight with the plumed pen."
3. The Commencement Address is entitled "Jefferson Davis as a Representative of Civilization." Since Du Bois had ten minutes, the typed paper from which he read is less than one thousand one hundred words long; a fuller version, handwritten (but in incomplete form) also is in the Du Bois Papers in this writer's custody. The Address has not been published.
4. *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois* (New York, 1968). For this sense of continuity, note also the striking similarity between Du Bois' "final word" in his *The Philadelphia Negro*, first published in 1899 and the preface to his *Color and Democracy*, published in 1945.

5. H. Aptheker, ed., *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* (New York, 1951), p. 753.
6. The present writer has completed what he hopes is a fairly definitive bibliography of Du Bois' published writings; it comes to several hundred pages. A selected bibliography, listing all his books and many of his most significant articles, is in the above-cited *Autobiography*, pp. 431-437.
7. Originally, Harcourt, Brace & Co. planned to issue the book in the spring of 1933 (Charles Pearce to Du Bois, Aug. 15, 1932); it was then postponed to the autumn of 1934 (Alfred Harcourt to Du Bois, Dec. 12, 1933); it actually appeared in May 1935.
8. Du Bois to Alfred Harcourt, Nov. 17, 1934; see also Du Bois to F. P. Keppel of the Carnegie Corporation, same date.
9. For example, in the midst of writing *Black Reconstruction*, Du Bois also—during a single year—taught two seminars and two classes at Atlanta University, conducted a housing survey in an Atlanta area destined for slum clearance, lectured in Texas, Louisiana, Missouri, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa, had general charge of the editing of *The Crisis* (and wrote its editorials), spoke twice at chapel at Morehouse, and, as head of the university's Department of Sociology, held "six or eight" conferences with the two other members of the department!—Du Bois to President John Hope of Atlanta University, March 28, 1934. (It should be added that Du Bois was also a conscientious and devoted husband and father.) See also Du Bois' preface to his *Black Folk: Then and Now* (New York, 1939).
10. This is from Du Bois' preface to Aptheker, ed., *Documentary History*.
11. Du Bois' review of Robert A. Warner, *New Haven Negroes*, (1940) in *American Historical Review*, XLVII (Jan. 1942), 376-377. Du Bois, feeling that the author, a white man, failed to comprehend his subject, added this comment: "I do not say that the only person who can write of England must be an Englishman, or that only Japanese should write of Japan; but I would insist that if a person is writing of a group to which he is socially and culturally alien, he must have some extraordinary gifts of insight."
12. This is from an instance—unique, I believe—when Du Bois was the joint author of an essay, with the late Professor Rushton Coulborn, of Atlanta University: "Mr. Sorokin's Systems," *Journal of Modern History*, XIV (Dec. 1942), 500-521; quoted material from pp. 507, 512, 517.
13. Du Bois, "The Enforcement of the Slave-Trade Laws," *Annual*

Report, American History Association, 1891, Washington, 1892. (Sen. Mis. Doc. 173, 52nd Cong., 1st sess.)

14. Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African-Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870* (Cambridge, 1896); reprinted New York, 1954.

15. Du Bois, "To the Nations of the World," statement issued by Pan-African Conference (London, 1900), reprinted in Du Bois, ed., *An ABC of Color*, (New York, 1970), p. 20; Du Bois, "The Freedman's Bureau," *Atlantic Monthly*, LXXXVII (March 1901), 354, 365; reprinted as Chapter 2, "Of the Dawn of Freedom," in *Souls of Black Folk* (1903).

16. This edition appeared in May 1965. It contained almost ninety additional pages consisting of selections from Du Bois' writing on Africa from 1955 through 1961.

17. Wish, *The American Historian* (New York, 1960), p. 259; Degler, *Out of the Past: The Forces That Shaped Modern America*, (New York, 1959), p. 441; Patrick, *The Reconstruction of the Nation* (New York, 1967), p. 306; Beale, "On Rewriting Reconstruction History," *American Historical Review*, XLV (July 1940), 809n.

18. Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth," appears in the illuminating book of essays (no editor given) by several Black authors called *The Negro Problem* (New York, 1903), pp. 33-75. Significant in this volume was Charles W. Chesnut's "The Disfranchisement of the Negro"; it contains a powerful attack on the pro-Bourbon version of Reconstruction. The relationship of Albion W. Tourg  e to this and to Du Bois is noticed in Otto H. Olsen's fine biography, *Carpetbagger's Crusade* (Baltimore, 1966), especially pp. 297-354.

19. See a letter from Mills in *Commentary*, June 1957; quoted in my *The World of C. Wright Mills* (New York, 1960), p. 7.

20. Du Bois' self-criticism on both counts will be found in his "Fifty Years After" note to the 1953 Blue Heron Press edition of his *Souls of Black Folk* and in the "Apologia" to the 1954 edition of his *Suppression of the African Slave Trade* (cited in note 14, above).

21. Du Bois to Benjamin Stolberg, Atlanta, Oct. 1, 1934.

22. Du Bois meant that the detailed monograph tended to abstract its subject from the larger world and that such abstraction meant distortion; it "sets a man to segregating from the total flow of history." He thought his own first book suffered from this (see his "Apologia," as cited above in note 20).

23. Du Bois to Ruth Anne Fisher, Atlanta, March 26, 1934.

24. Du Bois to F. P. Keppel, of the Carnegie Corporation, Atlanta, Nov. 17, 1934. The request was approved. Though the book was quickly, widely, and well reviewed, it did not at first "sell widely." During the entire year of 1936, the first full year following its publication, 376 copies were sold, according to royalty statements sent Du Bois by Harcourt, Brace & Co.

25. S. Lynd, ed., *Reconstruction* (New York, 1967); quotations from Lynd's introduction. He reprints in this volume Chapter 2 of *Souls of Black Folk* and Du Bois' 1909 paper before the American Historical Association, "Reconstruction and its Benefits," *American Historical Review*, XV (July 1910), 781-799. In his *Dusk of Dawn* (New York, 1940), p. 318-319, Du Bois states that this paper troubled U. B. Phillips very much but that "Dunning of Columbia and Hart of Harvard" seemed pleased. Wharton comments that the paper "received little attention"; certainly in terms of impact the profession was utterly unready. Vernon L. Wharton, "Reconstruction," in Arthur S. Link and Rembert W. Patrick, eds., *Writing Southern History: Essays in Historiography in Honor of Fletcher H. Green* (Baton Rouge, 1965), p. 308. Wharton's own summary of Du Bois' work in this essay is markedly inadequate.

26. Lynd observes that this awareness of the significance of the land question was "not new" even with Du Bois for it had been emphasized by contemporaries such as Julian, Stevens, and Douglass. Lynd moves from them and Du Bois to the 1960s. Unfortunately, he omits any reference to what I suppose is the "Old Left," as James S. Allen's *Reconstruction: The Battle for Democracy* (New York, 1937); Manuel Gottlieb's "The Land Question in Georgia During Reconstruction," *Science & Society*, III (Summer 1939), 356-388; H. Aptheker, *To Be Free* (New York, 1948), pp. 136-187; and relevant documents in my *Documentary History*, indexed under "Land, desire for."

There is a very clear summation of certain basic concepts, later developed in *Black Reconstruction*, in an appeal "To the People of Russia" which Du Bois wrote sometime in 1925 (probably in the latter half of that year—the manuscript is undated but from its contents there is no doubt of the year, for one of its purposes was to appeal for support in the *Sweet* case then being conducted by the NAACP). The relevant sentences appear as Du Bois commences a treatment of the Civil War period: "In this war nearly 200,000 Negroes fought for their own freedom and perhaps 300,000 others helped as laborers and servants so that their freedom was not given to them, it was earned.

However, the emancipation of the Negroes was not complete. They received no land, no tools, no capital. Most of them were compelled to remain on the same plantations as wage earners and usually their wages were paid in food and clothes sold at exorbitant prices. Those who ran away and went to the cities got a chance to work as laborers and to receive money wages. Naturally the working conditions of the Negroes were much worse than those of white laborers and they were exploited to the last degree." (Du Bois Papers.)

27. C. Vann Woodward, "The Political Legacy of Reconstruction," in his *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge, 1960); originally in *Journal of Negro Education*, in 1957. See *Black Reconstruction*, pp. 210, 212, 216, 584.

28. Horace Mann Bond, *Negro Education in Alabama: A Study in Cotton and Steel* (Washington, 1939); Bond notes on p. 309 that Du Bois "hints" at this. Du Bois in his review of Bond's book comments upon its confirmation and documentation of his earlier "unproved contention" and adds that this is a "most important contribution" *American Historical Review*, XLV (April 1940), 669.

29. On the call for historians to treat the poorer Southern whites, see *Black Reconstruction*, p. 721.

30. See *Black Reconstruction*, pp. 368, 602, 631. Wilson's essay appeared in the same volume of the *Atlantic Monthly* as Du Bois' on the Freedmen's Bureau—"The Reconstruction of the Southern States," LXXXVII (Jan. 1901), 1-15.

31. Du Bois to Stolberg, Atlanta, Oct. 1, 1934.

32. Beale, "Reconstruction History," pp. 811-812.

33. For Du Bois' remarks on post-Reconstruction history see *Black Reconstruction*, p. 692.

34. Du Bois, "Reconstruction, Seventy Years After," in *Phylon*, IV (3rd Quarter 1943), 205-212. In September 1931, Alfred Harcourt expressed interest upon learning of a Rosenwald grant to Du Bois for a study of Reconstruction (the grant was publicized in the press that summer). On Oct. 21, 1931, therefore, Du Bois sent Harcourt a four-page typed manuscript dealing with "the thesis of this book." Publication of this document must await another opportunity; it does constitute the earliest and fullest expression on its subject that I have seen.

35. The book referred to was done for the Knights of Columbus as part of a series it was supporting on "minority" peoples; its title was *The Gift of Black Folk* (Boston, 1924). Du Bois' comment on it occurs in his *Dusk of Dawn*, p. 269.

36. Tindall, "Southern Negroes Since Reconstruction: Dissolving the

Static Image," in Link & Patrick, eds., *Southern History*, p. 344. I wish to take note of four previous essays which deal with Du Bois as historian or with a particular aspect of his historical writings: Jessie P. Guzman, "W. E. B. Du Bois—The Historian," *Journal of Negro Education*, XXX (Fall 1961), 377-385; Daniel Walden, "Du Bois: Pioneer Reconstruction Historian," *Negro History Bulletin* (Feb. 1963), 159-160, 164; Charles H. Wesley, "Du Bois the Historian," *Freedomways*, V (Winter 1965), 59-72; William Leon Hansberry, "Du Bois' influence on African History," *Freedomways*, V (Winter 1965), 73-87.

37. As fate would have it, at the very period of the appearance of Du Bois' *Black Reconstruction*, the *American Historical Review* (XL [April 1935], 438-449) published Theodore Clark Smith's "The Writing of American History, 1884-1934," which was an attack upon any departure from orthodoxy (Smith had in mind some recent heresies announced by Charles Beard). Smith offered as prize exhibits of "rigidly accurate, impeccably documented" history writing that was "absolutely without prejudice"—"the general onslaught on the Reconstruction period which took place at Columbia under the guidance of our former honored associate, Professor Dunning." Another among Smith's prize exhibits of unprejudiced history writing was that by U. B. Phillips, whose "works . . . substituted direct observation and analysis for propaganda or emotional treatment."

It was of the 1930s also that L. D. Reddick, at that time a professor at Dillard University, wrote: "The American Historical Association has on occasion allowed such men as Professor Munroe (*sic*) Work, of Tuskegee, to appear. On the other hand, when one member of the committee on programs and arrangements suggested the names of Dr. Carter G. Woodson and Dr. Charles H. Wesley (both Harvard Ph.D.s and authors of several volumes), who happen to stem from a more aggressive tradition, the committee was immediately reshuffled and this member was promptly dropped." (Quoted by V. F. Calverton, "The Negro," in Harold E. Stearns, ed., *America Now: An Inquiry into Civilization in the U.S.* (New York, 1938), p. 488.

Chapter ix

1. Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York, 1965), p. 151.

2. Harvey Swados, "The Writer in Contemporary American Society," in Herbert Hill, ed., *Anger and Beyond: The Negro Writer in the United States* (New York, 1966), p. 71.

3. Edmund D. Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison, Wis., 1955), p. 70.

4. H. Aptheker, ed., *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* (New York, 1951), p. 405.
5. Compare this specific thought and even language with James Baldwin: "The tendency really has been, insofar as this was possible, to dismiss white people as the slightly mad victims of their own brain-washing"—*The Fire Next Time* (New York, 1963), p. 116.
6. Report by Lawrence Van Gelder in the *New York Times*, April 1, 1969.
7. This theme was basic to the arguments of Abolitionists, white and Black; it appears also in the worries of Southern whites about slavery—for example in comments by Jefferson. Jean-Paul Sartre, having in mind South Africa, said in 1968, "The very principle of racism leads the whites to render themselves very inferior to those whom they oppress. For them, as for the blacks, it is hell, with this difference, that it is a hell which they have chosen." Quoted in *Tri-Continental Information Center Bulletin*, II, No. 3 (March 1968), 2.
8. Langston Hughes, *Simple Speaks His Mind* (New York, 1950), p. 40.
9. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Towards Freedom* (New York, 1958), p. 54.

Chapter vii

1. An Appeal To the World! (NAACP, 1947), pp. 13-14.
2. Letter dated Boston, May 19, 1772, in C. G. Woodson, ed., *The Mind of the Negro . . .* (Washington, 1924), p. xvii.
3. *The Liberator* (Boston), Oct. 22, 1831.
4. *The Liberator*, Sept. 22, 1832.
5. *Proceedings of the Colored National Convention, held in Rochester, July 6-8, 1853* (Rochester, 1853), p. 9.
6. *The Independent* (New York), LI (May 18, 1899), 1355.
7. *The Sons of Africa: An Essay on Freedom* (Boston, 1808), pp. 8, 9.
8. *Freedom's Journal* (New York), October 3, 1828. See also Robert A. Young, *The Ethiopian Manifesto* (New York, 1829).
9. Samuel Hazard, ed., *The Register of Pennsylvania*, V (Feb. 27, 1830), 143.
10. *Minutes of the State Convention, of the Colored Citizens of the State of Michigan, Detroit, October 1843* (Detroit, 1843), p. 2.

11. *State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Ohio, Convened at Columbus, January 10-13, 1849* (Oberlin, Ohio, 1849), pp. 8-11.
12. See Woodson, ed., *Mind*, p. 70.
13. M. R. Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (Philadelphia, 1852), pp. 85, 209-215.
14. *A Memorial Discourse*, by Rev. Henry Highland Garnet. Introduction by James McCune Smith, M.D. (Philadelphia, 1865), p. 57.
15. Ralph N. Davis, "The Negro Newspaper in Chicago," unpublished M.A. thesis, (Univ. of Chicago, 1939), p. 13.
16. *Christian Recorder* (Philadelphia), Sept. 25, 1890. An earlier editorial in this magazine, March 13, 1890, opposed the establishment of "a great Negro state" within the confines of the United States.
17. *Christian Recorder*, June 26, 1890.
18. *Christian Recorder*, May 22, 1890. There had been proposals of a somewhat similar nature in the past and were to be in the future from several white people, but the development of that story is beyond the scope of this essay.
19. Quoted in M. C. Hill, "The All-Negro Communities of Oklahoma," in *Journal of Negro History*, XXXI (1946), 261.
20. A typical expression of Turner's views may be found in J. W. E. Bowen, ed., *Africa and the American Negro* (Atlanta, 1896), pp. 195-198.

Chapter viii

1. Copy of letter sent to Dr. Du Bois. All letters quoted in this chapter are from the Du Bois Papers in author's custody. This essay was published originally in *Science & Society*, Fall 1949. The Du Bois letters were used with his permission.
2. Basil Mathews, *Booker T. Washington* (Cambridge, Mass., 1948); W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn* (New York, 1940), p. 77. A brief contemporary account of this meeting by Du Bois is in *The Voice of the Negro* (Atlanta), III (Jan. 1906), 45.
3. Washington to Du Bois, New York, March 11, 1900. In conversation with Dr. Du Bois (March 1949), he stated to this writer that he clearly remembered two things concerning this event: he had not sought the appointment, and he did not get it.
4. This and the next paragraph are based upon Du Bois, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-79; and conversations with Dr. Du Bois.

5. The source is a letter Washington sent to Bishop Grant, Oct. 28, 1903, in which he states the quoted words were in a letter sent in February 1903. Washington told Du Bois, in a letter dated Tuskegee, Feb. 12, 1903, that he had sent out such a letter and that he was enclosing a copy. The enclosure was not found.
6. Washington to Du Bois, November 8, 1903.
7. The memorandum listed nineteen such men, including Washington, and described three others—Dr. I. B. Scott of New Orleans, H. T. Kealing of Philadelphia, and J. W. Lyons, Register of the Treasury of Washington, as "uncertain, possibly against Washington."
8. Indicative of the type of material referred to and used at the meeting, as the papers of Du Bois show, was a clipping from the *Norfolk News* of the summer of 1903 which contained a letter from Washington to J. E. Dickerson, its editor. The germane portion of the letter read: "I am very grateful to you for the policy your paper has pursued and is pursuing. I have asked my publishers to send you an advertisement for my book 'Up From Slavery,' and I think they will do so. In addition, I shall place in the *News* an advertisement for my Agricultural Department at Tuskegee Institute. I shall be glad to hear from you from time to time and to see copies of your paper." This letter was reprinted several times in the newspaper, which bitterly attacked all who in any way opposed Washington's leadership or policy.
9. Du Bois to Miss A. P. Moore, Atlanta, April 2, 1907. Miss Moore was connected with the Women's Baptist Home Mission in Chicago.
10. Hugh M. Browne to Du Bois, Cheyney, Pa., July 28, 1904.
11. Du Bois, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-80; and conversations with Du Bois.
12. Du Bois to Miss Moore, April 2, 1907.
13. For example: B. T. Washington, *The Negro and the Solid South*; R. R. Wright, Jr., *Self-Help in Negro Education*. Neither pamphlet is dated; both were published in Cheyney, Pa., by the Committee of Twelve for the Advancement of the Interests of the Negro Race.

Chapter ix

1. Of secondary sources, basic are Du Bois' *Dusk of Dawn*, New York, 1940), especially pp. 88-95; and his *Autobiography: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century*, ed. by H. Aptheker (New York, 1968), especially, pp. 236-253. In addition to works cited in later notes, the most important writings dealing with Niagara and its setting are: Otto H. Olsen, *Carpetbagger's Crusade: The Life of*

- Albton W. Tourgée* (Baltimore, 1965); Jack Abramowitz, "Accommodationism and Militancy in Negro Life, 1876-1915" (Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Columbia University, 1950); Elliott M. Rudwick, *W. E. B. Du Bois: A Study in Minority Group Leadership* (Philadelphia, 1960); Francis L. Broderick, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Negro Leader in a Time of Crisis* (Stanford, 1959); E. M. Rudwick, "The Niagara Movement," *Journal of Negro History*, XLII (July 1957), 177-200; Mary L. Chafee, "Du Bois' Concept of the Racial Problem in the U.S.," *Journal of Negro History*, XLI (July 1956), 241-258; August Meier, "Booker T. Washington and the Negro Press," *Journal of Negro History*, XXXVIII (Jan. 1953), 67-90; Emma L. Thornbrough, "More Light on Booker T. Washington and the N.Y. Age," *Journal of Negro History*, XLIII (Jan. 1958), 34-49; E. L. Thornbrough, "The National Afro-American League," *Journal of Southern History*, XXVII (Nov. 1961), 494-512; J. L. Crouthamel, "The Springfield Race Riot of 1908," *Journal of Negro History*, XLV (July 1960), 164-181; Ray Ginger, *Altgeld's America, 1892-1905* (New York, 1958), especially Chapter 5; Chester M. Destler, *Henry Demarest Lloyd and the Empire of Reform* (Philadelphia, 1963); Ann F. Scott, "A Progressive Wind from the South, 1906-1913," *Journal of Southern History*, XXIX (Feb. 1963), 53-70; August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915* (Ann Arbor, 1963); M. A. DeWolfe Howe, *Portrait of an Independent: Moorfield Storey* (Boston, 1932); Mary White Ovington, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down* (New York, 1947); Ridgely Torrence, *The Story of John Hope* (New York, 1948); Basil Mathews, *Booker T. Washington* (Cambridge, 1948); Paul G. Partington, "The Moon Illustrated Weekly—Precursor of *The Crisis*," *Journal of Negro History*, XLVIII (July 1963), 206-216; Helen M. Chesnutt, *Charles Waddell Chesnutt* (Chapel Hill, 1952); Arline Turner, *George W. Cable: A Biography* (Durham, 1956); C. W. Puttkammer and Ruth Worthy, "William Monroe Trotter," *Journal of Negro History*, XLIII (Oct. 1958), 298-316; Horace M. Bond, *Negro Education in Alabama* (Washington, 1939); Charles E. Wynes, ed., *The Negro in the South Since 1865* (1965); C. E. Wynes, "The Evolution of Jim Crow Laws in 20th Century Virginia," *Phylon*, XXVIII (Winter 1967), 416-425; James M. McPherson, "The Antislavery Legacy: From Reconstruction to the NAACP," in B. J. Bernstein, ed., *Towards a New Past* (New York, 1968), pp. 126-157; Daniel Walden, "Race and Imperialism: The Achilles Heel of the Progressives," *Science & Society*, XXXI (Spring 1967), 222-232; Larry Cuban, "A Strategy for Racial Peace: Negro Leadership in Cleveland, 1900-1919," *Phylon*, XXVIII (Fall 1967) 299-311; Allan H. Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920* (Chicago, 1967); August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, "The Boycott Movement Against Jim Crow Streetcars in the South: 1900-1906," *Journal of*

American History, LV (March 1969), 756-775; R. W. Logan, *The Negro In American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877-1901* (New York, 1954); C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge, 1951); Gilbert Osofsky, *The Burden of Race* (New York, 1967), especially pp. 164-259. The main documents of Niagara are in H. Aptheker, ed., *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the U.S.* (New York, 1951), pp. 897-915; the entire section VII (pp. 750-928) is relevant and cites many of the primary sources.

2. Dewey W. Grantham, Jr., "The Progressive Movement and the Negro," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, LIV (Oct. 1955), 461-477; quotation is from p. 477.

3. Anna Strunsky died in 1964. Shortly before her death she sent a book-length manuscript, plus photos and other memorabilia, concerning her 1905-1907 visit to Russia to V. Bykov, a Soviet writer. The latter describes all this in an article (in Russian) entitled "Anna Strunsky's Parcel," in *Ogonyek*, Jan. 1965.

4. Moorfield Storey to Miss Ellen F. Mason, March 17, 1911, in M. A. DeWolfe Howe, *Portrait of an Independent* (Boston, 1932), pp. 252-253. Correspondence between Du Bois and Storey commenced in a letter from the former, dated Atlanta University, Oct. 21, 1907. Du Bois complimented Storey on his leadership in the anti-imperialist struggle and asked for material he might use "to impress the students what wars and especially wars of conquest really mean." Storey replied from his Boston law office, Oct. 24, 1907, thanking Du Bois and adding: "I have long been anxious to meet you, and hope I may have the opportunity before long for I am familiar with what you have written and am in very cordial sympathy with your views. I am glad I find that you feel the same sympathy in the work I have been engaged in." (Du Bois Papers, in custody of the writer. All subsequent quoted matter, unless otherwise indicated, is from the same source.)

5. Aptheker, ed., *Documentary History*, pp. 881-883.

6. Frederick L. Hoffman, *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro* (New York, 1896).

7. *The Chicago Socialist*, Nov. 28, 1903; Owen Wister's best-selling *The Virginian*, published in 1902, glorified vigilantism. In the same period Andrew D. White, U.S. Minister to Germany, insisted that "there are communities in which lynch law is better than any other"; see Richard M. Brown, "The American Vigilante Tradition," in H. D. Graham and T. R. Gurr, eds., *The History of Violence in America* (New York, 1969), p. 195. In the first twenty years of the twentieth century scores of workers were killed by police and vigilantes in labor struggles, see P. Taft and P. Ross, "American Labor Violence," in Graham & Gurr, *op. cit.*, Chapter 8.

8. Quoted by Horace Man Bond, in *Negro Education in Alabama* (Washington, 1939), p. 211.

9. *The Michigan Daily*, Jan. 22 and Sept. 23, 1902, quoted in Oakley C. Johnson, "The Negro-Caucasian Club: A History," *Michigan Quarterly Review*, April 1969, pp. 103-104.

10. F. Boas, "Human Faculty As Determined by Race," *Proceedings, American Association for Advancement of Science*, XLIII (1894) 301-327; see R. Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, rev. ed. (Boston, 1955), p. 193.

11. Select Committee on Education, *Education at Berkeley* (Berkeley, 1966), p. 152; see also S. Cohen, "The Industrial Education Movement, 1906-1917," *American Quarterly*, XX (Spring 1968), 95-110.

12. H. G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography* (New York, 1934), p. 68.

13. "Die Negerfrage in den Vereinigten Staaten," *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* (Tübingen), XXII (1906) 31-79; in the same period Du Bois published "L'Ouvrier Nègre en Amérique" in *Revue Economique Internationale* (Brussels), IV (Nov. 1906), 298-348.

14. L. R. Harlan, "The Southern Education Board and the Race Issue," originally in *Journal of Southern History*, May 1957; reprinted in C. E. Wynes, ed., *Negro in South*, pp. 202-218; quoted matter on p. 207.

15. The entire text of this manifesto is in *An ABC of Color: Selections from Over Half a Century of the Writings of Du Bois* (Berlin, 1963; reprinted New York, 1970), pp. 19-23.

16. M. W. Ovington, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down* (New York, 1947), pp. 100-101.

17. See the account of the 61st Annual Meeting in the *Afro-American*, Aug. 26, 1967.

18. I. M. Rubinow, a well-known economist, wrote Du Bois from Washington Nov. 12, 1904, affirming his own belief in the validity of socialism and suggesting that the socialist approach would shed great light on the nature of the so-called Negro question. On Nov. 17, 1904, Du Bois replied cordially; among other things he wrote: "While I would scarcely describe myself as a socialist still I have much sympathy with the movement and I have many socialistic beliefs."

19. The federal publications of Du Bois' studies were: "The Negro in the Black Belt: Some Social Sketches," *Bulletin*, U.S. Dept. of Labor, No. 22, May 1899; "The Negroes of Farmville, Virginia," *ibid.*, No. 14, Jan. 1898; "The Negro Landholder of Georgia," *ibid.*, No. 35, July 1901. A detailed study that he made of Lowndes County, Alabama, in 1906, was paid for by the U.S. government, but it refused publication and refused

to return the manuscript to Du Bois.

20. Aptheker, *Documentary History*, pp. 884-886.

Chapter xi

1. See Wayne Cooper, "Claude McKay and the New Negro of the 1920s," *Phylon*, XXV (1964), 297-306; Gilbert Osofsky, "Symbols of the Jazz Age: The New Negro and Harlem Discovered," *American Quarterly*, XVII (1965), 229-238; and Hugh M. Gloster, *Negro Voices in American Fiction* (Chapel Hill, 1948), especially Chapter 3.
2. For these data, see Charles S. Johnson, *The Negro College Graduate* (Chapel Hill, 1938), p. 9; John D. Hicks, *Republican Ascendancy*, (New York, 1960), p. 187; R. L. Duffus, *Democracy Enters College* (New York, 1936), p. 1.
3. N. C. Newbold, "Common Schools for Negroes in the South," in Donald Young, ed., *The American Negro* (Philadelphia, 1928, Annals of the American Academy, Vol. 140), pp. 213-214; Willard Range, *The Rise and Progress of Negro Colleges in Georgia, 1865-1949* (Athens, 1951), p. 181.
4. *The New Student* (N.Y.), III, No. 15 (April 26, 1924), 15. This magazine—with its characteristic title (everything being "new"—the *New South*, *New Masses*, *New Republic*, and, of course, yet again, *New Negro*)—was the organ of the National Student Forum. It commenced publication as a weekly April 19, 1922, and terminated as a monthly June 1929. Both the periodical and the Forum merit studies of their own.
5. For example, Richard Hofstadter and Wilson Smith, eds., *American Higher Education: A Documentary History*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1961), ignores the Afro-American; see this book's introduction.
6. On both cases, see the comments by Walter Metzger and Sanford H. Kadish in Samuel Gorowitz, ed., *Freedom and Order in the University* (Cleveland, 1967), pp. 59-60, 130. To see how persistent is the traditional view of students' rights, compare Arnold M. Rose, *Libel and Academic Freedom* (Minneapolis, 1968), p. 56.
7. Published in a pamphlet issued early in 1925 by Fisk University and entitled *Letters and Telegrams from Parents of Fisk Students, Alumni and Friends-at-Large, Together with Certain Statements Relative to the Recent Disturbance at Fisk University, February 4, 1925*, pp. 38-40. The quoted material is on p. 40, misnumbered p. 30. A xeroxed copy from the original in the Harvard Library was very generously supplied me by Mr. Peter H. Clark, Jr., of Harvard.

8. "Postscript" by Du Bois in *The Crisis*, XXXIV (Dec. 1927), 347-348. As for the control of Negro colleges: in 1928, of 79 such institutions, 31 were under white church ownership and control, 17 under Negro denominational churches, 9 were owned and controlled by independent boards of trustees and privately supported, and 22 were publicly supported under State ownership and control—Charles S. Johnson, *The Negro in American Civilization* (New York, 1930), Chapter 20. See the estimate of Negro colleges in the 1920s in J. Saunders Redding, *They Came in Chains* (Philadelphia, 1950), pp. 282-283; Redding himself attended Lincoln University (Pa.) in the 1920s, but graduated from Brown in 1928. See similar conclusions offered by E. Franklin Frazier in *The Negro in the United States* (New York, 1949), p. 479. Frazier graduated from Clark in 1920. For the present, see the contrasting views of Nathan Hare and Stephen J. Wright in *Saturday Review*, July 20, 1968.
9. McKay, in *Pearson's Magazine*, Sept. 1918, p. 276. McKay entered Tuskegee in 1912 and soon transferred to Kansas State College—and left it in 1914. See Cooper, "Claude McKay," p. 299.
10. Davis, "Unrest in the Negro Colleges," *The New Student*, VIII (Jan 1929), 13-14.
11. Houston, in *The Crisis*, XX (July 1920), 122-125. This entire article repays careful study.
12. The first quotation is from Du Bois' very influential article, "The Dilemma of the Negro," in *American Mercury*, III (Oct. 1924), 179-185—see pp. 183, 184. (This article was commented on widely in both the Black and white press; also many letters came to Du Bois—and to Mencken—concerning it.) The second quotation is from Du Bois' "Opinion" section of *The Crisis*, XXI (March 1926), 216.
13. In addition to the Jones and Du Bois monographs, see C. S. Johnson, *Negro Graduate*, p. 293, and John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom* (New York, 1947), pp. 538-539.
14. Six Black teenagers were barred, for example, from the senior prom given by the Girls' High School of Brooklyn, New York, in 1920. Among them was the author of the Senior Class' song, Gwendolyn Bennett! A committee of Brooklyn residents, chaired by Du Bois and including the Reverend George Frazier Miller, was formed to fight this. It succeeded and the young ladies, with escorts, participated in the prom with no untoward incidents. Considerable correspondence concerning this is in the Du Bois Papers.
15. The contemporary Black press—especially *The Crisis*—frequently

noted such discrimination. The Du Bois Papers have much material on this; in particular, there is a "Memo to Mr. [Walter] White," prepared by Du Bois, dated Dec. 22, 1925, detailing examples of such practices.

16. The only demonstrative action listed above which this writer did not find in contemporary press and magazine reports was that in Livingstone College, Salisbury, N.C., in May 1923. Professor J. H. Johnson of that college, in a letter dated that city, June 27, 1923, stated: "The whole student body, practically, went on strike and remained out nearly all the month of May [sic], most of them not returning at all." Du Bois Papers.

17. *The Crisis*, XXII (Nov. 1921), 34.

18. Letter dated Greencastle, Indiana, Aug. 13, 1919, from Charles G. Bloach to Du Bois. Du Bois accepted honorary membership in a reply dated Aug. 16. The name Bloach is uncertain because of the handwriting; it was so read by Du Bois.

19. *The Crisis*, XXIII (May 1922), 29.

20. Undated letter (but written in 1922, sometime prior to July) from William O. Stokes, a Dayton attorney, to Du Bois. Among honorary members were listed Du Bois, William Pickens, and William H. Lewis.

21. Printed programs for the 1925-1926 and 1927-1928 seasons of this association are in the Du Bois Papers. Among the officers were Harcourt Tynes and Juliette Dericotte.

22. See the article by Mary S. Hundley in *Opportunity*, No. 31, June 1925.

23. *The Crisis*, XXVI (Aug. 1923), 167-168.

24. There is correspondence between Thomas L. Dabney and Du Bois in 1923 and 1924. The present writer feels uncertain of his data on these points.

25. Butler, "The Negro Youth Awakening," in *The New Student*, II, No. 15 (April 21, 1923) 4.

26. In *Opportunity*, No. 15 (March 1924), 75-77.

27. *The New Student*, II, No. 11, (Feb. 24, 1923), 1.

28. Du Bois, in *American Mercury*, III (Oct. 1924), 185.

29. Du Bois' paper, "The Negro Citizen," is published as Chapter 29 of Charles S. Johnson's *The Negro in American Civilization* (New York, 1930).

Chapter xiii

1. A. Binet, *Les Idées Modernes sur Les Enfants* (Paris, 1909), pp. 141-146.

2. Stephen S. Colvin, "Principles underlying the construction and use of intelligence tests," in *The 21st Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* (Bloomington, 1922), pp. 19, 20, 23. Emphases in original.

3. For an example showing this popular acceptance see E. L. Horowitz, "Race Attitudes," in O. Klineberg, *Characteristics of the American Negro* (New York, 1944), p. 226.

4. See Klineberg, *Characteristics*, p. 35.

5. Early tests by Stetson (1897), Ferguson (1916), and Sunne (1917) found Blacks getting equal or higher scores in the entire tests or in critical sections thereof. Tests by Peterson and Lanier (*Mental Measurement Monographs*, V [1929] 1-156) showed higher scores for whites in Nashville, very slightly higher in Chicago, and identical in New York. Practically identical scores were found by McAlpin in Washington in 1932 (*Journal of Negro Education*, I, 44ff.), and Long had the same result there in 1934 (*ibid.*, III, 205ff.). Note, too, the well-known test of 500 Black youngsters in Los Angeles (1925) by Clark, where the scores achieved by them (median of 104.7) were slightly higher than those of the whites (*Education Research Bulletin*, Los Angeles City Schools, 1925).

6. An outstanding example of this is the result of the Army intelligence tests during World War I, in which Blacks from Pennsylvania, New York, Illinois, and Ohio achieved higher median scores than whites from Mississippi, Kentucky, Arkansas, and Georgia.

7. Specific documentation of these facts would cover almost the entire literature of educational psychology for the past twenty years. As examples, see W. C. Bagley, *Determinism in Education* (Baltimore, 1925); Clark Foreman, *Environmental Factors in Negro Elementary Education* (New York, 1932); O. Klineberg, *Race Differences* (New York, 1935); and *The 39th Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* (Bloomington, 1940), Part I.

8. M. E. Shimberg, "An investigation into the validity of norms with special reference to urban and rural groups," *Archives of Psychology*, No. 104. (1929). For an awareness of this problem of standardization see David Wechsler, *The Measurement of Adult Intelligence*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore, 1944), Chapter 8. Of his own device, the Wechsler-Bellevue Scale, he writes (p. 107): "We have eliminated the 'colored' vs. 'white' factor by admitting at the outset that our norms cannot be used for the colored population of the United States."

9. Walter S. Neff, "Socio-economic status and intelligence," in *Psychological Bulletin*, XXXV (1938), 727-756. Emphases in original. For a

critique of Neff which does not refute his basic point, see Hollingworth, Terman, and Oden, "The significance of deviates," in *39th Yearbook*, p. 48.

10. Wechsler, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

11. For lamentations over the fact that experiments such as the one described were impractical for they would be "so difficult and expensive," see Hollingworth, Terman, and Oden, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

12. *Selective Service in Peacetime, First Report of the Director of Selective Service 1940-41* (Washington, 1942), p. 174. For a recent study showing how official figures grossly understate illiteracy see David Harman's essay in the special issue, "Illiteracy in America," *Harvard Educational Review*, May 1970 (XL,2).

13. *Selective Service in Wartime, Second Report of the Director of Selective Service 1941-42* (Washington, 1943), p. 230.

14. *Selective Service in Peacetime*, p. 174.

15. *Selective Service as the Tide of War Turns, The Third Report of the Director of Selective Service 1943-44* (Washington, 1945), p. 207.

16. *Selective Service in Peacetime*, p. 174.

17. *Idem.*

18. It may be unnecessary to remark, as does General Hershey (*Selective Service in Peacetime*, p. 259), that this very much higher rate of illiteracy for Blacks as compared to whites exists "not because Negroes resist education or for any other reason than that 'educational opportunities just are not available to them.'" It is of particular interest to note that while the percentage of Negroes rejected from May 15 to September 15, 1941, because of illiteracy (12.3%), is about eleven times that of the white rate (1.1%), in fifteen states the rejection rate for Negroes was less than the total percentage of white rejections and that in twenty-six states the rejection rate for Negroes was less than that for whites in ten Southern states. See *The Black and White of Rejections for Military Service* (American Teachers Assn., Montgomery, Ala., 1944), p. 3.

19. *Selective Service in Peacetime*, p. 174. *Selective Service in Wartime*, p. 231.

20. *Selective Service in Wartime*, p. 232.

21. *Selective Service in Wartime*, p. 231.

22. *Selective Service as the Tide of War Turns*, pp. 207-208.

23. *Idem.*

24. *Black and White of Military Rejections*, p. 5.

25. *Selective Service as the Tide of War Turns*, p. 208.

26. H. C. Warren, ed., *Dictionary of Psychology* (Boston, 1934), p. 140; Colvin, "Principles," p. 15; F. N. Freeman, "The Meaning of Intelligence," in *39th Yearbook*, p. 18; P. Witty, "New evidence on the learning ability of the Negro," in *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 40:404 (1945).

27. For descriptions of the work of the special training units, see: A. G. Trudeau, "Army experiences and problems of Negro education," in *Education for Victory* 3:13-16 (1945); Witty, "New evidence," pp. 401-404; S. Goldberg, "Psychological Procedures Employed in the Army's Special Training Units," in *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 1:118-125 (1945); P. Witty and S. Goldberg, "The use of visual aids in Special Training Units in the Army," in *Journal of Educational Psychology* 35:82-90 (1944); Witty and Goldberg, "Evolution in education through Army experience," in *ibid.*, pp. 338-346; Witty and Goldberg, "The Army's training program for illiterate, non-English speaking and educationally retarded men" in *Elementary English Review* 20:306-311 (1943); N. Kaplan, "Salvaging illiterates in the Army," in *Occupations* 23:74-76 (1944); J. C. Evans, "Adult education for Negroes in the Armed forces" in *Journal of Negro Education* 14:438-439 (1945). None of these articles is in any sense critical, and all are in reality more descriptive of the plan than its execution.

28. Letter from Colonel S. M. Prouty to the present writer, dated Washington, March 5, 1946.

29. Figures created by people and dealing with people are subject to error. The writer has heard, from people whose opinions he respects, of men who "completed" STU work but remained illiterate. Pressure did exist, it may be believed, on administrators to make as good records as possible—on paper, if necessary. Yet these figures are official, nothing else exists, and the numbers involved are so vast that individual irregularities probably would not materially affect the percentages.

30. Figures from letter from Col. S. M. Prouty to present writer, dated Washington, March 14, 1946.

31. Trudeau, "Army experiences," p. 14.

32. A valuable general critique of intelligence testing is that by the English scholar Brian Simon, *Intelligence Testing and the Comprehensive School* (London, 1953).

A racist society will persist in efforts to spread racist mythology. In the 1950s, as part of the McCarthyite "neo-conservatism," there was a resurgence of "proofs" of inferior intelligence among Black people. In the late 1960s, with resistance to enhanced militancy, especially on the educational front, there appeared more such "proofs," all sensational-

ized by the commercial press and leaped on by the Right. Notable was the effort by Arthur R. Jensen in *Harvard Educational Review*, Winter 1969, summarized in *U.S. News & World Report*, March 10, 1969, and hailed by Ernest van den Haag and William F. Buckley, Jr. (see the latter's column, dated March 20, 1969, in the *New York Post*) The Jensen essay was rebutted by the council of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues—see the *New York Times*, May 11, 1969. See also Gilbert Voyat, "IQ: God-Given or Man-Made?" in *Saturday Review*, May 17, 1969.

Chapter xvi

1. These letters are in M. A. DeWolfe Howe, *Portrait of an Independent: Moorfield Storey* (Boston, 1932) pp. 221-222, 239. As late as 1926, 1927, and 1928, Storey was publishing essays in leading U.S. journals attacking U.S. colonialism and intervention in Asia and Latin America.
2. E. Davidson Washington, *Selected Speeches of Booker T. Washington* (Garden City, 1922), p. 217.
3. On this see W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn* (New York, 1940), p. 248.
4. Roy Wilkins may be interested in reading how much of the worldwide white press greeted these congresses. Here, for instance, is the *Brussels Neptune*, June 14, 1921: "Announcement has been made of a Pan-African Congress organized at the instigation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. It is interesting to note that this association is directed by personages who it is said in the U.S. have received remuneration from Moscow (Bolsheviks)."
5. Walter White, *A Man Called White* (New York, 1948), pp. 115-116.
6. R. Wilkins, "The Negro Wants Full Equality," in R. W. Logan, ed., *What the Negro Wants* (Chapel Hill, 1944), p. 131.
7. On this see W. E. B. Du Bois, *Color and Democracy: Colonies and Peace* (New York, 1945), pp. 128-129.
8. White, *A Man*, p. 352, italics added.

«APPENDIX»

The First Petition to the United Nations from the Afro-American People

At the tenth anniversary meeting of the National Negro Congress, held in Detroit, Michigan, May 30 to June 2, 1946, the delegates voted to present a "Petition to the United Nations on Behalf of Thirteen Million Oppressed Negro Citizens of the United States of America," seeking, as it said, "the elimination of political, economic and social discrimination against Negroes in the United States of America."

Part of that petition was a statement of proof in support of it; that was prepared at the request of the Congress by the present author and is published below, exactly as then written. The petition itself was presented to Mr. Trygve Lie, the U.N. Secretary-General, in New York City on June 6, 1946; it went from there to the U.N. Economic and Social Council but opposition from the U.S. delegates prevented its serious discussion.

THE OPPRESSION OF THE AMERICAN NEGRO: The Facts

In the United States of America there are over thirteen million human beings restricted to a second-class citizenship, and subjected to a brutal system of oppression and discrimination based upon the inhuman, unscientific, fascist theory of "racism."

These statements shall be established by citing data obtained, in their entirety, directly from official publications of the United States Government.

Population

The United States census of 1940 showed that of a total Negro

population of 12,865,518, almost ten millions (9,904,619) lived in the South, 2,790,193 lived in the North, and 170,708 lived in the West.

A former Governor of South Carolina, and a member of the Senate of the United States for many years, Mr. Cole Blease, in speaking to his constituents, said:¹ "God made man the Negro to be your servant. The Negro was meant to be a hewer of wood and a drawer of water." While this is blasphemous as to the Lord's intentions, it is accurate as to the intentions, *and accomplishments*, of the class for which Mr. Blease spoke.

Occupations

The facts are that, in 1940, there were 4,479,069 Negro wage earners in the United States (1,542,273 of them women), and that the vast majority were "hewers of wood and drawers of water." Well over half (55%) were engaged in the two lowest paid and least protected of all occupations; that is, over one million (1,003,508) were domestic service workers, and almost one and a half million (1,447,052) were agricultural workers. Another half million (522,229) were engaged in "other service" work, and still half a million more (464,195) were "operatives." This left a total of about 370,000 individuals to make up the manager, proprietor, professional and semi-professional, clerical, sales, foremen and craftsmen groups *combined*.²

In 1940, seven out of every ten employed Negroes were engaged in unskilled work, and 94 out of every 100 employed Negroes followed manual pursuits. The proportion of unskilled workers amongst the Negro people was 350% greater than amongst the whites!³ Of course, these same census reports demonstrate that Negroes can, and do, perform all the functions of modern civilization, from accountant to architect, from editor to engineer, from physician to physicist, from surgeon to psychologist. Science has demonstrated, without any question, that the idea of inferiority is a deliberately concocted myth, so that these data substantiate nothing but the wholesale oppression of a myriad of peoples.

And not only are they, as a people, largely confined to the poorest paying occupations, but within these occupations they are paid less than others. This may be proven not only by

every-day observation, and by official statistics, but it is the overtly expressed program of the oppressors. Thus, for example, a publication of the University of Kentucky declared,⁴ in 1935: "An additional argument in favor of the salary differential between Negro and white teachers is the general tradition of the South that *Negroes and whites are not to be paid equivalent salaries for equivalent work.*" (Italics added.)

Family Income

The earnings of the Negro people mirror their subordinate occupational status. As has been shown, the occupation engaging the greatest number of Negroes is agricultural work, confined, almost entirely, to the South. The *family* income of rural-farm families with a farm laborer as head of the household equalled in 1939 (last year for which complete official figures are available⁵) \$363 for the entire United States and \$295 for the South. The respective figures for the white and the Negro in the South were \$337 as compared with \$254, and it may be added that over 40 per cent of these Negroes had a *total yearly family income of less than \$200*.

An official survey of the over-all family incomes of America (for 1935-36) disclosed that the average (medium) yearly income per family in the rural South (including not only money income, but also income in kind and the imputed value of housing) was, for whites, \$1,100 and for Negroes \$480, or 44% as high. In Southern cities the respective figures were \$1,570 and \$525, the Negro family thus obtaining one-third that of the white, while in North Central cities (population 100,000 and over) white families averaged \$1,720 and Negro, \$1,095.⁶ The meaning of these figures, in human terms, will be somewhat more apparent when it is realized that, as of March 1935, the cost of a WPA emergency budget for a manual worker with a wife and two young children in Columbia, South Carolina, was \$845, in Mobile, Alabama, \$815, in Atlanta, Georgia, \$911, and in Columbus, Ohio, \$940.⁷

As of 1940, two-thirds of the Negro families in the United States earned less than \$750 a year, and this was true notwithstanding the fact that about 2 in every 5 Negro women were in the labor force, in contrast to 2 in every 8 white women.⁸ Here

too, it is important to note that the government itself declared that a city family of three needed, in 1941, an income of \$1,475 "to cover current living expenditures," almost exactly *twice* that actually obtained by most of its urban Negro citizens!⁹

Housing

These statistics represent, of course, food, homes, life and death. Official publications have summed up some of the facts in a few succinct lines and figures. Thus, for housing, we are told:¹⁰ "... most Negroes have been unable to rent or own decent, safe, and sanitary houses in which to live and bring up their children."

Figures will make this concrete. In the United States, in 1940, there were 3,293,406 dwelling units for Negroes. Of these over one million (1,082,128) "needed major repairs," and almost two million (1,908,100) had no running water. Over twice as many Negro homes as white (35.1% and 16.3%) needed major repairs, and almost three times as many Negro homes as white (62% and 26.6%) had no running water. Twice as many white homes as Negro homes (82.9% and 43%) had electricity. All these figures are, of course, very much worse in the South, where the bulk of the Negro citizens live. Thus, to illustrate, it may be mentioned that *well over 70% of all Negro homes in that area have neither electricity nor running water.*¹¹

Health

This oppression cripples and kills. Sickness, which incapacitates for a minimum of one week, is 40% more common to the Negro than to the white. In 1940, while 46 out of every 1,000 white children born alive did not live to reach their first birthdays, 85 Negro children died during the same period. And the proportion of deaths for children from one to four years of age is almost twice as high for the Negro as for the white, while the maternal death rate is more than twice as high. Finally, while a white man could expect, in 1940, to reach almost 63 years, the Negro man's life expectancy was 52; and the figures for white and Negro women were 67 and 55 respectively. These figures, let this be perfectly clear, are "no more than a difference of mortality for different economic classes,"¹² they do not represent some innate "racial" characteristic. More-

over, as the Children's Bureau of the Department of Labor showed, the infant mortality rate for Negro families whose fathers earned less than \$450 per year was practically the same (indeed, a little lower) than that for white families of a similar economic status.¹³

Education

The attempted degradation of this entire people includes and is concentrated upon, unequal educational opportunities. This fact of undemocratic education may be demonstrated in dozens of different sets of official figures issued by all or some of those seventeen States where separate—Jim Crow—systems are required by law, and where the majority of the Negro people live.

The latest compilation coming from the United States Office of Education states:¹⁴ "Data for any given year show the wide differences which still exist in many States between educational opportunities for white and Negro children."

All phases and facets show this discrimination. Thus, for 1941-42, while the load per white teacher was about 28 pupils, it was 36 for the Negro teachers; while the average number of days a white child attended school was 144, it was 128 for the Negro; the average annual salary for the instructional staff (including supervisors, principals, and teachers) in Alabama was \$923 for whites and \$458 for Negroes, in Arkansas \$740 and \$441, in Florida \$1,282 and \$671, in Georgia, \$961 and \$460, in Louisiana \$1,303 and \$547, in Mississippi \$712 and \$226, in South Carolina \$1,038 and \$465, in Virginia \$1,133 and \$765. The eleven Southern States that reported its expenditures on transporting Negro and white children to the schools spent a total of \$1,329,095 for Negroes, while the single State of Alabama spent \$1,994,018 to transport its white children. In this regard, South Carolina, whose Negro children number very nearly the same as the white children (212,630 and 262,580) spent \$1,222,226 for transporting the latter and \$6,691 for the former! Again, for "promotion of health" the State of Georgia spent \$30,426 on its white children and \$1,571 on its Negro children, though the latter equal well over half the former in total numbers.¹⁵ In terms of figures, one may summarize by stating that the level of support of the median

classroom unit per year in the South for Negro schools equalled from \$400-\$499, and for white schools it equalled \$1,100-\$1,199—and some people still prattle about “separate but equal” facilities!¹⁶

The tragedy behind these statistics was forcefully brought before the American people during the late war. The percentage of draft registrants deferred because of educational deficiency (illiteracy) from May 15 to September 14, 1941, was eleven times greater for Negroes than for whites! This was, of course, the result of the educational system provided for them, and of nothing else. Thus, within fifteen states the rejection rates for Negroes were *lower* than the total percentage rate of white rejections, and *in twenty-six Northern states, the rejection rates for Negroes were less than they were for the whites in ten of the Southern states.*¹⁷

This inequality of opportunity exists not only in elementary education, but also, and to an even greater degree, in higher education. This becomes crystal-clear when one realizes that, in 1940, the median school year completed by the Negro throughout the country was 5.7 while it was 8.4 for the white. Over 40% of the total Negro population, as of 1940, has been forced to complete no more than four years of formal education, as compared to 13% of the white population. The abominable situation has been summarized, officially, in this sentence:¹⁸ “There is a definite lack of availability of higher educational facilities for Negroes in those States maintaining separate schools.”

Other Public Services

Privileges and rights, other than education, normally associated with full American citizenship, are likewise very largely denied the Negro. Thus, to quote again the summary remarks of a government publication¹⁹: “. . . in cities, paving, lighting, sewerage service and police protection often cease where the Negro residence section begins. . . . In many areas there is no hospital service of any kind available to Negroes, and the medical and nursing service is often wholly inadequate if not lacking altogether.” And, in many sections of the nation Negroes are “either excluded or permitted to occupy only some special section” so far as museums, art galleries, theatres,

concert halls, public auditoriums, parks, gymnasiums, and swimming pools are concerned.

Library service for Negroes in the South (where, remember, over nine million Negroes live) is utterly insufficient. Thus, in 1939 there were in thirteen Southern States a total of 99 poorly equipped public libraries which served Negroes. This was less than one-seventh of all such institutions in the areas, and meant that while 43% of the white people of the South are provided with public library service, but 21% of the Negroes have any such service.²⁰

Civil Liberties

There is an unanimous agreement, by all observers and commentators, that fundamental legal rights, such as service on ordinary and grand juries, freedom from search and arrest except by warrant, and freedom from physical torture when in the hands of the law, are highly exceptional as concerns the vast majority of America's Negro citizens.²¹

Nor is there any disagreement as to the fact that, in violation of all law, the majority of these citizens are deprived, by subterfuge and force, of the vital right of the suffrage. This fact is openly and proudly announced by the successful politicians foisted upon the South and the nation by such an undemocratic system. Thus, to cite but one example, the present senior United States Senator from the State of Georgia, Walter F. George, wrote for publication, in 1938²²: “Why apologize or evade? We have been very careful to obey the letter of the Federal constitution—but we have been very diligent and astute in violating the spirit of such amendments and such statutes as would lead the Negro to believe himself the equal of the white man. And we shall continue to conduct ourselves in that way.”

This disfranchisement affects, as it is meant to, the poor-Negro and white—and its results are clear. To cite an outstanding example: in the last Presidential election (1944) only 27.9% of the entire potential electorate of the thirteen Southern States actually voted, while 61.9% of the potential electorate of the other thirty-five States exercised their suffrage. The figures for 1944 are arresting when one looks at the (then) eight poll-tax States for there (Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Arkansas, Georgia,

Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina) only 19% of the potential voters did vote! And remember, these percentages include both Negro and white people.²³

Peonage and Violence

No survey of the oppression of the American Negro, unsavory though it be, may neglect two other basic phenomena—peonage and violence. Neither of these is, as yet, subject to precise statistical presentation, but that both are widespread is unquestionable, and each deserves full, thorough investigation by groups independent of the dominant Southern cliques.

Reports of the existence of peonage have appeared and reappeared in the American press for fifty years,²⁴ some of it creeps into recent government publications,²⁵ occasional indictments and even convictions of individuals suspected or guilty of the practice recur (there were seven Federal indictments and five convictions for peonage, all involving Negroes, during the late war²⁶), eyewitness accounts appear in authentic studies,²⁷ and, in 1939, the Social Service Committee of the Georgia Baptist Convention, meeting in Augusta, declared²⁸ that there were more people then held in debt-slavery or peonage than had ever been chattel-slaves in America.

Agreement exists, too, that violence against Negroes is so common, particularly in the South, as to be institutionalized. Most publicized, of course, is the tactic of lynching, and while organized struggle against this bestial practice has undoubtedly reduced the frequency of its appearance, it still does occur and the threat of its use is very much alive.

Of greater importance, today, however, is the device of "dry lynching," the secret, unpublicized mutilation or destruction of an "undesirable" Negro by a small group of individuals (frequently, it is believed, officers of the law). From the nature of this device precise details and figures are not available, but it is significant that a study, in 1940, sponsored by four United States Congressmen, including Senators Wagner and Capper, by a "native white Southerner who must remain anonymous" states "that countless Negroes are lynched yearly, but their disappearance is shrouded in mystery, for they are dispatched quietly and without general knowledge."²⁹ Other recent works have offered substantiating remarks,³⁰ and this is certainly a

type of barbarism that should be thoroughly investigated and absolutely extirpated.

Conclusion

The effect upon the mental life of both the victims and the manipulators of this economic, social, political, and physical machine of oppression is only now beginning to be analyzed scientifically, but enough has already appeared to make clear the terrible urgency of the question.³¹

The cancer of racism has spread its poison throughout the life of America. Its throttling and killing effect upon the people of the entire nation—North and South, Negro and white—grows more fearful and more anachronistic with the passing of each hour.

The Negro people, for themselves, and for the benefit of all other inhabitants of America, demand full freedom and absolute equality. Nothing short of this will satisfy them. Where one is enslaved, all are in chains.

Notes

1. In 1913, quoted by Robert L. Jack, *History of the NAACP* (Boston, 1943) pp. 67, 68
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3. Alba M. Edwards, *Comparative Occupational Statistics for the United States, 1870-1940* (U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1943), p. 188
4. *Bulletin of the Bureau of School Service*, University of Kentucky, March 1945, p. 26
5. Louis J. Ducoff, *Wages of Agricultural Labor in the United States*, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Technical Bulletin No. 895 (Washington, July, 1945), p. 98
6. *Consumer Incomes in the United States: Their distribution in 1935-36*. (National Resources Committee, U. S. Gov't Printing Office, Washington, 1943), p. 28
7. M. S. Stecker, *Intercity Differences in Costs of Living*, March 1935, (Research Monograph XII, W. P. A. Washington, 1937), p. 172
8. *Public Housing and the Negro*, (U. S. Public Housing Authority, Washington, 1941, p. 1; A. M. Edwards, op. cit., p. 188; *Negro Women War Workers* (Bulletin No. 205, Women's Bureau, U. S. Dept. of Labor, Washington, 1945), p. 1

9. *Monthly Labor Review*, (1942), LXII, p. 1 (published in Washington by the Department of Labor)
10. *Public Housing and the Negro*, op. cit., p. 1
11. *Housing*, Vol. II, Part I, 16th Census, 1940 (U. S. Gov't Printing Office, Washington, 1943), pp. 16, 17, 18, 19, 24, 25
12. Figures and quotation are from F. E. Linder and R. D. Grove, *Vital Statistics Rates in the United States, 1900-1940*, 16th Census U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1943), pp. 12, 177, 179, 650
13. See T. J. Woofster, Jr., *Races and Ethnic Groups in American Life* (N. Y., 1933, monograph in President's Committee on Recent Social Trends), p. 153
14. D. T. Blose and H. F. Alves, *Statistics of State School Systems, 1939-40 and 1941-42* (U. S. Office of Education, Washington, 1944), p. 38
15. All preceding data on education from source as in note 14
16. J. K. Norton and E. S. Lawler, *An Inventory of Public School Expenditures in the United States* (mimeographed, American Council on Education, Washington, 1944) I, p. 12
17. L. B. Hershey, *Selective Service in Wartime*, First Report of the Director of Selective Service 1940-41, (U. S. Gov't. Printing Office, Washington, 1942) p. 402; *The Black and White of Rejections for Military Service* (American Teachers Association Studies, Montgomery, Ala., 1944), p. 2
18. Ambrose Caliver, *A Summary: National Survey of the Higher Education of Negroes*, Misc. No. 6, Vol. IV (U. S. Office of Education, Washington, 1943)
19. I. C. Brown, *Socio-Economic Approach to Educational Problems*, Misc. No. 6, Vol. I (U. S. Office of Education, Washington, 1942) p. 43
20. E. A. Gleason, *The Southern Negro and the Public Library*, (University of Chicago, 1941), pp. 90, 93
21. For a recent authoritative summary, based on source material, see Charles S. Mangum, Jr., *The Legal Status of the Negro* (University of North Carolina 1940), passim.
22. *Liberty Magazine*, April 21, 1938
23. These facts are conveniently presented in *Voting Restrictions in 13 Southern States*, a report by the Committee of Editors and Writers of the South (Atlanta, 1945), introduction

24. See, for example, the citations in J. G. Van Deusen, *The Black Man in White America* (Washington, 1944) pp. 18-19.
25. L. J. Ducoff, op. cit., p. 24
26. Florence Murray in *Social Forces* (1945) XIV, p. 213
27. A. Davis, B. Gardner, M. Gardner, *Deep-South* (University of Chicago, 1941) pp. 337, 340-41, 351-53, 356-57, 392
28. J. Gollomb, *What's Democracy to You?* (N. Y., 1940) p. 65; G. Myrdal, *An American Dilemma* (N. Y., 1944), II, p. 1242
29. *Lynching Goes Underground* (n. p., 1940) sponsored by Senators Wagner and Capper and Representatives Fish and Gavagan. See Myrdal, op. cit., II, 1350.
30. See C. S. Johnson, *Growing Up in the Black Belt* (Washington, 1942) p. 5; J. D. Ames, *The Changing Character of Lynching* (Atlanta, 1942) p. 9
31. See, for example, the six volumes of the "Negro Youth Survey" by Reid, Davis and Dollard, Frazier, Johnson, Walker, Junker and Adams, and Sutherland, published from 1940-44 in Washington by the American Youth Commission of the American Council on Education.

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